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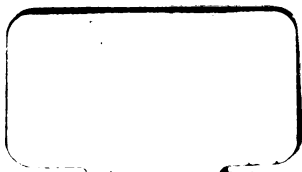
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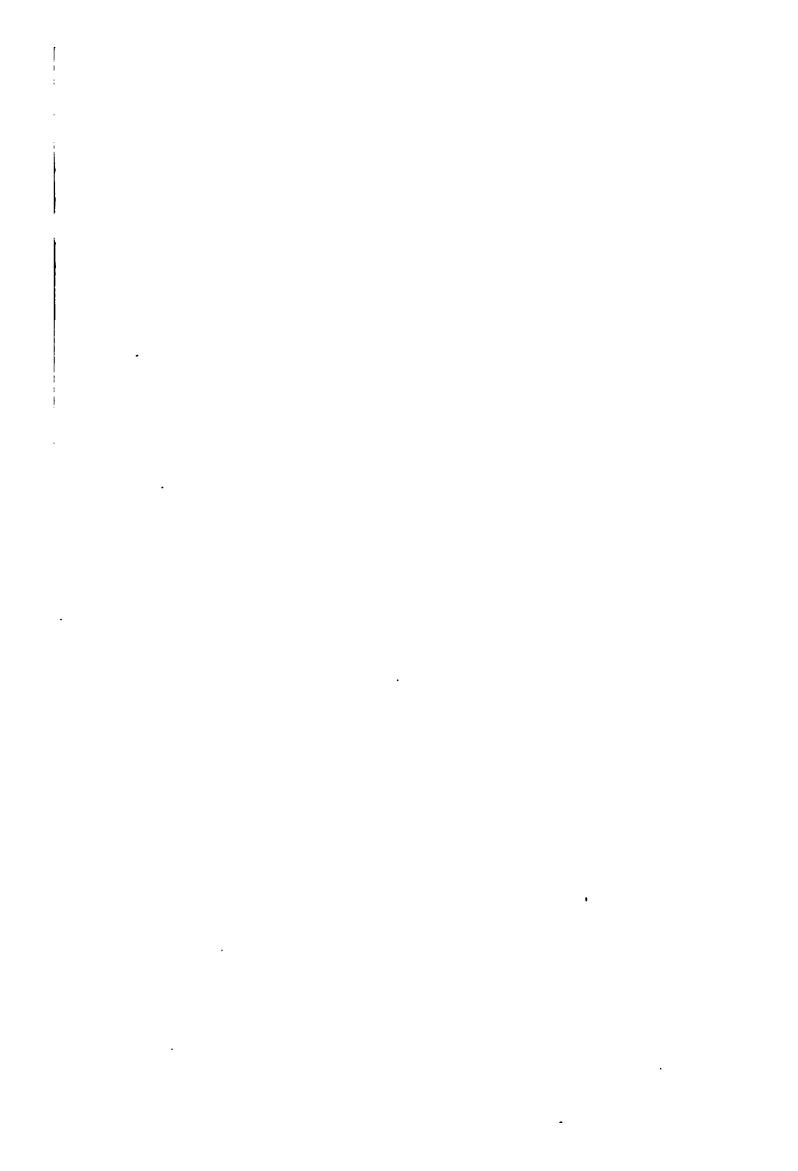
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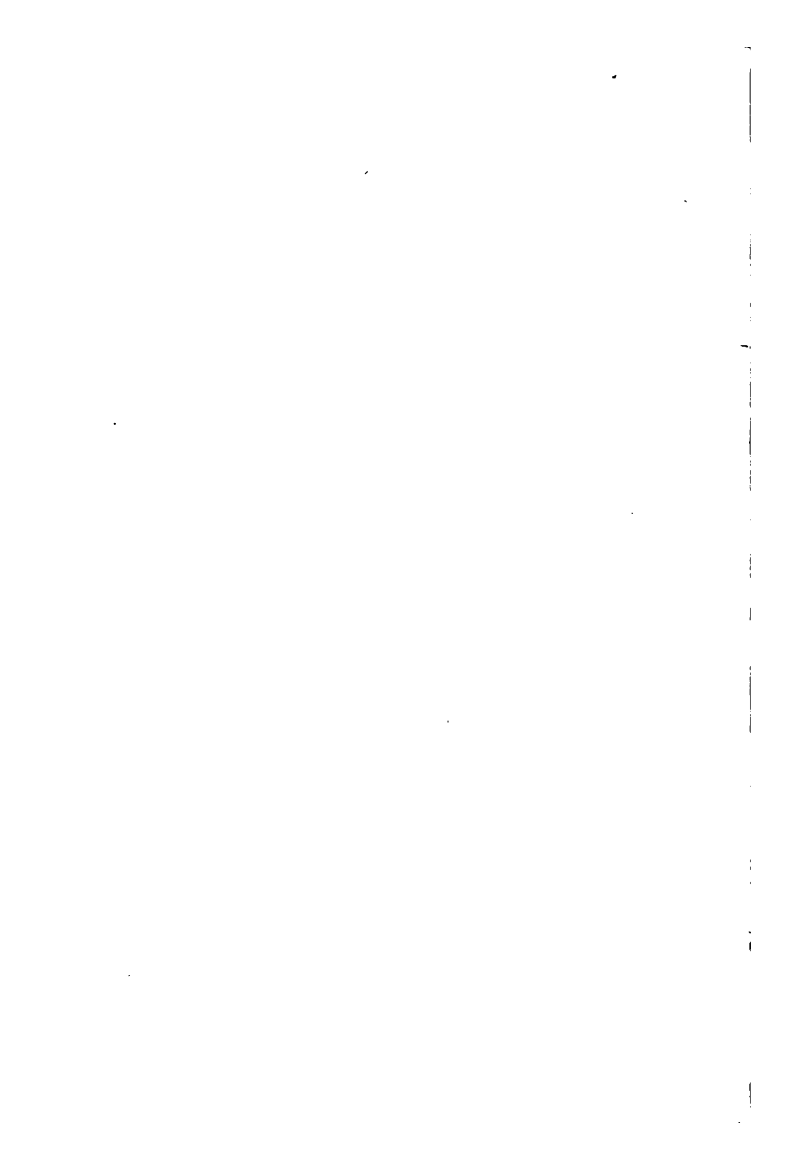
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PUBLIC PARKS

**BEING TWO PAPERS READ BEFORE THE
AMERICAN SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION
IN 1870 AND 1880, ENTITLED, RESPECTIVELY,
PUBLIC PARKS AND THE ENLARGEMENT
OF TOWNS » » » » » » » AND
A CONSIDERATION OF THE JUSTIFYING
VALUE OF A PUBLIC PARK » » » »**

BY FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED

BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS, 1902



**PUBLIC PARKS AND THE EN-
LARGEMENT OF TOWNS**

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PUBLIC PARKS AND THE ENLARGEMENT OF TOWNS.

The last Overland Monthly tells us that in California "only an inferior class of people can be induced to live out of towns. There is something in the country which repels men. In the city alone can they nourish the juices of life."

This of newly built and but half-equipped cities, where the people are never quite free from dread of earthquakes, and of a country in which the productions of agriculture and horticulture are more varied, and the rewards of rural enterprise larger, than in any other under civilized government! With a hundred million acres of arable and grazing land, with thousands of outcropping gold veins, with the finest forests in the world, fully half the white people live in towns, a quarter of all in one town, and this quarter pays more than half the taxes of all. "Over the mountains the miners," says Mr. Bowles, "talk of going to San Francisco as to Paradise," and the rural members of the Legislature declare that "San Francisco sucks the life out of the country."

At the same time all our great interior towns are reputed to be growing rapidly; their newspapers complain that wheat and gold fall much faster than house-rents, and especially that builders fail to meet the demand for such dwellings as are mostly sought by new-comers, who are mainly men of small means and young families, anxious to make a lodgment in the city on any terms which will give them a chance of earning a right to remain. In Chicago alone, it is said that there are twenty thousand people seeking employment.

To this I can add, from personal observation, that if we stand, any day before noon, at the railway stations of these cities, we may notice women and girls arriving by the score, who, it will be apparent, have just run in to do a little shopping, intending to return by supper time to farms perhaps a hundred miles away.

It used to be a matter of pride with the better sort of our country people that they could raise on their own land or manufacture within their own households almost everything needed for domestic consumption. But if now you leave the rail, at whatever remote station, the very advertisements on its walls will manifest how greatly this is changed. Push out over the prairie and make your way to the house of any long settled and prosperous farmer, and the

intimacy of his family with the town will constantly appear, in dress, furniture, viands, in all the conversation. If there is a piano, they will be expecting a man from town to tune it. If the baby has outgrown its shoes, the measure is to be sent to town. If a tooth is troublesome, an appointment is to be arranged by telegraph with the dentist. The railway time-table hangs with the almanac. The housewife complains of her servants. There is no difficulty in getting them from the intelligence offices in town, such as they are; but only the poorest, who cannot find employment in the city, will come to the country, and these as soon as they have got a few dollars ahead, are crazy to get back to town. It is much the same with the men, the farmer will add; he has to run up in the morning and get some one to take "Wolf's" place. You will find, too, that one of his sons is in a lawyer's office, another at a commercial college, and his oldest daughter at an "institute," all in town. I know several girls who travel eighty miles a day to attend school in Chicago.

If under these circumstances the occupation of the country schoolmaster, shoemaker, and doctor, the country storekeeper, dressmaker and lawyer, is not actually gone, it must be that the business they have to do is much less relatively to the population about them than it used

to be; not less in amount only, but less in importance. An inferior class of men will meet the requirements.

And how are things going here in Massachusetts? A correspondent of the Springfield Republican gave the other day an account of a visit lately made to two or three old agricultural neighborhoods, such as fifty years ago were the glory of New England. When he last knew them, their society was spoken of with pride, and the influence of not a few of their citizens was felt throughout the state, and indeed far beyond it. But as he found them now, they might almost be sung by Goldsmith. The meeting-house closed, the church dilapidated; the famous old taverns, stores, shops, mills, and offices dropping to pieces and vacant, or perhaps with a mere corner occupied by day laborers; but a third as many children as formerly to be seen in the school-houses, and of these less than half of American-born parents.

Walking through such a district last summer, my eyes were gladdened by a single house with exceptional signs of thrift in fresh paint, roofs, and fences, and newly planted door-yard trees; but happening as I passed to speak to the owner, in the second sentence of our conversation he told me that he had been slicking his place up in hopes that some city gentleman

would take a fancy to it for a country seat. He was getting old, had worked hard, and felt as if the time had fully come when he was entitled to take some enjoyment of what remained to him of life by retiring to the town. Nearly all his old neighbors were gone; his children had left years ago. His town-bred granddaughters were playing croquet in the front yard.

You know how it is here in Boston. Let us go on to the Old World. We read in our youth that among no other people were rural tastes so strong, and rural habits so fixed, as with those of Old England, and there is surely no other country where the rural life of the more fortunate classes compares so attractively with their town life. Yet in the Transactions of the British Social Science Association we find one debater asserting that there are now very few more persons living in the rural districts of England and Wales than there were fifty years ago; another referring to "the still increasing growth of our overgrown towns and the stationary or rather retrograding numbers of our rural population,"* while a third remarks that the social and educational advantages of the towns are drawing to them a large proportion of "the wealthy and independent," as well as all of the working classes not required for field labor.†

* Transactions, 1864.

† Transactions, 1861.

When I was last in England, the change that had occurred even in ten years could be perceived by a rapid traveler. Not only had the country gentleman and especially the country gentlewoman of Irving departed wholly with all their following, but the very embers had been swept away of that manner of life upon which, so little while ago, everything in England seemed to be dependent. In all the country I found a smack of the suburbs—hampers and packages from metropolitan tradesmen, and purveyors arriving by every train, and a constant communication kept up with town by penny-post and telegraph.

In the early part of the century, the continued growth of London was talked of as something marvelous and fearful; but where ten houses were then required to accommodate new residents, there are now a hundred. The average rate at which population increases in the six principal towns is twice as great as in the country at large, including the hundreds of other flourishing towns. So also Glasgow has been growing six times faster than all Scotland; and Dublin has held its own, while Ireland as a whole has been losing ground.

Crossing to the Continent, we find Paris absorbing half of all the increase of France in population; Berlin growing twice as fast as all

Prussia; Hamburg, Stettin, Stuttgart, Brussels, and a score or two of other towns, all building out into the country at a rate never before known, while many agricultural districts are actually losing population. In Russia special provision is made in the laws to regulate the gradual compensation of the nobles for their losses by the emancipation of the serfs, to prevent the depopulation of certain parts of the country, which was in danger of occurring from the eagerness of the peasantry to move into the large towns.*

Going still further to the eastward, we may find a people to whom the movement has not thus far been communicated; but it is only where obscurity affords the best hope of safety from oppression, where men number their women with their horses, and where labor-saving inventions are as inventions of the enemy.

There can be no doubt then, that, in all our modern civilization, as in that of the ancients, there is a strong drift townward. But some seem to regard the class of symptoms I have referred to as those of a sort of moral epidemic, the crisis and reaction of which they constantly expect to see. They even detect already a growing disgust with the town and signs of a back-set towards rural simplicity. To avoid

* Nation, vol. x, p. 161.

prolonged discussion of the question thus suggested I will refer but briefly to the intimate connection which is evident between the growth of towns and the dying out of slavery and feudal customs, of priestcraft and government by divine right, the multiplication of books, newspapers, schools, and other means of communication, transportation, and of various labor-saving inventions. No nation has yet begun to give up schools or newspapers, railroads or telegraphs, to restore feudal rights or advance rates of postage. King-craft and priestcraft are nowhere gaining any solid ground. On the contrary, considered as elements of human progress, the more apparent forces under which men have thus far been led to gather together in towns are yet growing—never more rapidly than at this moment. It would seem then more rational to prepare for a continued rising of the townward flood than to count upon its subsidence. Examining our own country more particularly, it is to be considered that we have been giving away our public lands under a square form of division, as if for the purpose of preventing the closer agricultural settlement which long and narrow farms would have favored, and that we have used our mineral deposits as premiums for the encouragement of wandering and of forms of enterprise, individual, desultory, and seques-

tered in character, in distinction from those which are organized, systematized, and public. This policy has had its day, the choicest lands have been taken up, the most prominent and easiest worked metallic veins have been seized, the richest placers are abandoned to Chinamen, and the only reaction that we can reasonably anticipate is one from, not toward, dispersion.

The same policy, indeed, has had the effect of giving us, for a time, great command of ready money and easy credit, and we have thus been induced to spend an immense sum—say two thousand millions—in providing ourselves with the fixtures and machinery of our railroad system. This system, while encouraging the greater dispersion of our food-producers, has tended most of all to render them, as we have seen, independent of all the old neighborhood agencies of demand and supply, manufacture and exchange, and to educate them and their children in familiarity with and dependence on the conveniences and habits of towns-people.

To touch upon another line of argument, we all recognize that the tastes and dispositions of women are more and more potent in shaping the course of civilized progress, and we may see that women are even more susceptible to this townward drift than men. Ofttimes the husband

and father gives up his country occupations, taking others less attractive to him in town, out of consideration for his wife and daughters. Not long since I conveyed to a very sensible and provident man what I thought to be an offer of great preferment. I was surprised that he hesitated to accept, until the question was referred to his wife, a bright, tidy American-born woman, who promptly said: "If I were offered a deed of the best farm that I ever saw, on condition of going back to the country to live, I would not take it. I would rather face starvation in town." She had been brought up and lived the greater part of her life in one of the most convenient and agreeable farming countries in the United States.

Is it astonishing? Compare advantages in respect simply to schools, libraries, music, and the fine arts. People of the greatest wealth can hardly command as much of these in the country as the poorest work-girl is offered here in Boston at the mere cost of a walk for a short distance over a good, firm, clean pathway, lighted at night and made interesting to her by shop fronts and the variety of people passing.

It is true the poorer work-girls make little use of these special advantages, but this is simply because they are not yet educated up to them. When, however, they come from the country to

town, are they not moving in the way of this education? In all probability, as is indicated by the report (in the New York Tribune) of a recent skillful examination of the condition and habits of the poor sewing women of that city, a frantic desire to escape from the dull lives which they have seen before them in the country, a craving for recreation, especially for more companionship in yielding to playful girlish impulses, innocent in themselves, drives more young women to the town than anything else. Dr. Holmes may exaggerate the clumsiness and dreariness of New England village social parties; but go further back into the country among the outlying farms, and if you have ever had part in the working up of some of the rare occasions in which what stands for festivity is attempted, you will hardly think that the ardent desire of a young woman to escape to the town is wholly unreasonable.

The civilized woman is above all things a tidy woman. She enjoys being surrounded by bright and gay things perhaps not less than the savage, but she shrinks from dragging, smirching, fouling things and "things out of keeping" more. By the keenness with which she avoids subjecting herself to annoyances of this class, indeed, we may judge the degree in which a woman has advanced in civilization. Think

what a country road and roadside, and what the back yard of a farmhouse, commonly is, in winter and spring-time; and what far-away farmers' gardens are in haying time, or most of them at any time. Think, again, how hard it is when you city people go into the country for a few weeks in summer, to keep your things in order, to get a thousand little things done which you regard as trifles when at home, how far you have to go, and with how much uncertainty, how much unaccustomed management you have to exercise. For the perfection and delicacy — the cleanness — with which any human want is provided for depends on the concentration of human ingenuity and skill upon that particular want. The greater the division of labor at any point, the greater the perfection with which all wants may be satisfied. Everywhere in the country the number and variety of workmen, not agricultural laborers, proportionately to the population, is lessening as the facility for reaching workmen in town is increasing. In one year we find fifty-four new divisions of trade added to the London Directory.

Think of all these things, and you will possibly find yourself growing a little impatient of the common cant which assumes that the strong tendency of women to town life, even though it involves great privations and dangers, is a

purely senseless, giddy, vain, frivolous, and degrading one.

The consideration which most influences this tendency of women in families, however, seems to be the amount of time and labor, and wear and tear of nerves and mind, which is saved to them by the organization of labor in those forms, more especially, by which the menial service of households is simplified and reduced. Consider, for instance, what is done (that in the country is not done at all or is done by each household for itself, and, if efficiently, with a wearing, constant effort of superintendence) by the butcher, baker, fishmonger, grocer, by the provision venders of all sorts, by the iceman, dustman, scavenger, by the postman, carrier, expressmen, and messengers, all serving you at your house when required; by the sewers, gutters, pavings, crossings, sidewalks, public conveyances, and gas and water works.

But here again there is every reason to suppose that what we see is but a foretaste of what is yet to come. Take the difference of demand upon invention in respect to cheap conveyance, for example. We began experimentally with street railways twenty years ago. At present, in New York, one pair of horses serves to convey one hundred people, on an average, every day at a rate of fare about one-fiftieth

of the old hackney-coach rates, and the total number of fares collected annually is equal to that of the population of the United States. And yet thousands walk a number of miles every day because they cannot be seated in the cars. It is impossible to fix a limit to the amount of travel which really ample, convenient, and still cheap means of transportation for short distances would develop. Certain improvements have caused the whole number of people seeking conveyances in London to be doubled in the last five years, and yet the supply keeps nowhere near the demand.

See how rapidly we are really gaining, and what we have to expect. Two recent inventions give us the means of reducing by a third, under favorable circumstances, the cost of good McAdam roads. There have been sixteen patents issued from one office for other new forms of perfectly smooth and nearly noiseless street pavement, some of which, after two or three years' trial, promise so well as to render it certain that some improvement will soon come by which more than one of the present special annoyances of town life will be abated. An improvement in our sewer system seems near at hand also, which will add considerably to the comparative advantages of a residence in towns, and especially the more open town suburbs.

Experiments indicate that it is feasible to send heated air through a town in pipes like water, and that it may be drawn upon, and the heat which is taken measured and paid for according to quantity required. Thus may come a great saving of fuel and trouble in a very difficult department of domestic economy. No one will think of applying such a system to farm-houses.

Again, it is plain that we have scarcely begun to turn to account the advantages offered to towns-people in the electric telegraph ; we really have not made a beginning with those offered in the pneumatic tube, though their substantial character has been demonstrated. By the use of these two instruments, a tradesman ten miles away on the other side of a town may be communicated with, and goods obtained from him by a housekeeper, as quickly and with as little personal inconvenience as now if he were in the next block. A single tube station for five hundred families, acoustic pipes for the transmission of orders to it from each house, with a carriers' service for local distribution of packages, is all that is needed for this purpose.

As to the economy which comes by systematizing and concentrating, by the application of a large apparatus, of processes which are otherwise conducted in a desultory way, wasteful of human strength, as by public laundries, bak-

eries, and kitchens, we are yet, in America, even in our larger cities, far behind many of the smaller towns of the Old World.

While in all these directions enterprise and the progress of invention are quite sure to add rapidly to the economy and convenience of town life, and thus increase its comparative attractions, in other directions every step tends to reduce the man-power required on the farms for the production of a given amount of the raw material of food. Such is the effect, for instance, of every improvement of apparatus or process in ploughing, moving, reaping, curing, thrashing, and marketing.

Another tendency arising from the improvement of agricultural apparatus, which will be much accelerated when steam shall have been as successfully applied to tillage as already to harvesting and marketing operations, is that to the enlargement of fields and of farms. From this will follow the greater isolation of rural homesteads; for with our long-fronted farms, it will be long before we can hope to have country roads on which rapid engine-transit will be practicable, though we may be close upon it wherever firm and smooth roads can be afforded.*

* *Slow freighting* over earth roads is practicable; 500 locomotives are now in regular use on common roads.

It should be observed that possession of all the various advantages of the town to which we have referred, while it very certainly cannot be acquired by people living in houses a quarter or a half a mile apart, does not, on the other hand, by any means involve an unhealthy density of population. Probably the advantages of civilization can be found illustrated and demonstrated under no other circumstances so completely as in some suburban neighborhoods where each family abode stands fifty or a hundred feet or more apart from all others, and at some distance from the public road. And it must be remembered, also, that man's enjoyment of rural beauty has clearly increased rather than diminished with his advance in civilization. There is no reason, except in the loss of time, the inconvenience, discomfort, and expense of our present arrangements for short travel, why suburban advantages should not be almost indefinitely extended. Let us have a cheap and enjoyable method of conveyance, and a building law like that of old Rome, and they surely will be.

As railroads are improved, all the important stations will become centers or sub-centers of towns, and all the minor stations suburbs. For most ordinary every-day purposes, especially housekeepers' purposes, these will need no very

large population before they can obtain urban advantages. I have seen a settlement, the resident population of which was under three hundred, in which there was a public laundry, bath-house, barber's shop, billiard-room, beer-garden, and bakery. Fresh rolls and fresh milk were supplied to families before breakfast time every morning; fair fruit and succulent vegetables were delivered at house doors not half an hour after picking; and newspapers and magazines were distributed by a carrier. I have seen a town of not more than twelve hundred inhabitants, the streets and the yards, alleys, and places of which were swept every day as regularly as the house floors, and all dust removed by a public dustman.

The construction of good roads and walks, the laying of sewer, water, and gas pipes, and the supplying of sufficiently cheap, rapid, and comfortable conveyances to town centers, is all that is necessary to give any farming land in a healthy and attractive situation the value of town lots. And whoever has observed in the French agricultural colonies how much more readily and cheaply railroads, telegraph, gas, water, sewer, and nearly all other advantages of towns may be made available to the whole population than under our present helter-skelter methods of settlement, will not believe that

even the occupation of a farm laborer must necessarily and finally exclude his family from a very large share of urban conveniences.

But this opens a subject of speculation, which I am not now free to pursue. It is hardly a matter of speculation, I am disposed to think, but almost of demonstration, that the larger a town becomes because simply of its advantages for commercial purposes, the greater will be the convenience available to those who live in and near it for coöperation, as well with reference to the accumulation of wealth in the higher forms — as in seats of learning, of science, and of art — as with reference to merely domestic economy and the emancipation of both men and women from petty, confining, and narrowing cares.

It also appears to be nearly certain that the recent rapid enlargement of towns and withdrawal of people from rural conditions of living is the result mainly of circumstances of a permanent character.

We have reason to believe, then, that towns which of late have been increasing rapidly on account of their commercial advantages, are likely to be still more attractive to population in the future; that there will in consequence soon be larger towns than any the world has yet known, and that the further progress of civiliza-

tion is to depend mainly upon the influences by which men's minds and characters will be affected while living in large towns.

Now, knowing that the average length of the life of mankind in towns has been much less than in the country, and that the average amount of disease and misery and of vice and crime has been much greater in towns, this would be a very dark prospect for civilization, if it were not that modern Science has beyond all question determined many of the causes of the special evils by which men are afflicted in towns, and placed means in our hands for guarding against them. It has shown, for example, that under ordinary circumstances, in the interior parts of large and closely built towns, a given quantity of air contains considerably less of the elements which we require to receive through the lungs than the air of the country or even of the outer and more open parts of a town, and that instead of them it carries into the lungs highly corrupt and irritating matters, the action of which tends strongly to vitiate all our sources of vigor — how strongly may perhaps be indicated in the shortest way by the statement that even metallic plates and statues corrode and wear away under the atmospheric influences which prevail in the midst of large towns, more rapidly than in the country.

The irritation and waste of the physical powers which result from the same cause, doubtless indirectly affect, and very seriously affect, the mind and the moral strength; but there is a general impression that a class of men are bred in towns whose peculiarities are not perhaps adequately accounted for in this way. We may understand these better if we consider that whenever we walk through the denser part of a town, to merely avoid collision with those we meet and pass upon the sidewalks, we have constantly to watch, to foresee, and to guard against their movements. This involves a consideration of their intentions, a calculation of their strength and weakness, which is not so much for their benefit as our own. Our minds are thus brought into close dealings with other minds without any friendly flowing toward them, but rather a drawing from them. Much of the intercourse between men when engaged in the pursuits of commerce has the same tendency—a tendency to regard others in a hard if not always hardening way. Each detail of observation and of the process of thought required in this kind of intercourse or contact of minds is so slight and so common in the experience of towns-people that they are seldom conscious of it. It certainly involves some expenditure nevertheless. People from the country are

even conscious of the effect on their nerves and minds of the street contact — often complaining that they feel confused by it; and if we had no relief from it at all during our waking hours, we should all be conscious of suffering from it. It is upon our opportunities of relief from it, therefore, that not only our comfort in town life, but our ability to maintain a temperate, good-natured, and healthy state of mind, depends. This is one of many ways in which it happens that men who have been brought up, as the saying is, in the streets, who have been most directly and completely affected by town influences, so generally show, along with a remarkable quickness of apprehension, a peculiarly hard sort of selfishness. Every day of their lives they have seen thousands of their fellow-men, have met them face to face, have brushed against them, and yet have had no experience of anything in common with them.

It has happened several times within the last century, when old artificial obstructions to the spreading out of a city have been removed, and especially when there has been a demolition of and rebuilding on a new ground plan of some part which had previously been noted for the frequency of certain crimes, the prevalence of certain diseases, and the shortness of life among its inhabitants, that a marked improvement in

all these respects has immediately followed, and has been maintained not alone in the dark parts, but in the city as a whole.

But although it has been demonstrated by such experiments that we have it in our power to greatly lessen and counteract the two classes of evils we have had under consideration, it must be remembered that these means are made use of only with great difficulty—how great, one or two illustrations from experience will enable us perhaps better to understand.

When the business quarter of New York was burnt over, thirty years ago, there was a rare opportunity for laying out a district expressly with a view to facilitate commerce. The old plan had been arrived at in a desultory way; and so far as it had been the result of design, it had been with reference more especially to the residence of a semi-rural population. This had long since passed away; its inconvenience for commercial purposes had been experienced for many years; no one supposed from the relation of the ground to the adjacent navigable waters that it would ever be required for other than commercial purposes. Yet the difficulties of equalizing benefits and damages among the various owners of the land prevented any considerable change of the old street lines. Every working day thousands of dollars are subtracted

from the profits of business by the disadvantages thus reestablished. The annual loss amounts to millions.

Men of barbarous habits laid out a part of London in a way which a thousand years later was found to be a cause of an immeasurable waste of life, strength, and property. There had been much talk, but no effective action, looking toward improvement, when the great fire came, and left every building a heap of ashes. Immediately upon this, while the fire was still burning, a great man, Sir Christopher Wren, prepared a plan for avoiding the old evils. This plan, a simple, excellent, and economical one, he took to the king, who at once approved it, took a strong interest in it, and used all his royal power to have it carried out. It was hailed with satisfaction by all wise and good men, and yet so difficult was it to overcome the difficulties entailed by the original rural laying out of the ground, that the attempt was finally abandoned, and the new city was built with immaterial modifications under the old barbarous plan; and so it remains with only slight improvement, and that purchased at enormous cost, to this day.

Remedy for a bad plan, once built upon, being thus impracticable, now that we understand the matter we are surely bound, wherever it is by

any means in our power, to prevent mistakes in the construction of towns. Strange to say, however, here in the New World, where great towns by the hundred are springing into existence, no care at all is taken to avoid bad plans. The most brutal Pagans to whom we have sent our missionaries have never shown greater indifference to the sufferings of others than is exhibited in the plans of some of our most promising cities, for which men now living in them are responsible.

Not long since I was asked by the mayor of one of these to go before its common council and explain the advantages of certain suggested changes, including especially the widening of two roads leading out of town and as yet but partially opened and not at all built upon. After I had done so, two of the aldermen in succession came to me, and each privately said in effect: "It is quite plain that the proposition is a good one, and it ought to be adopted; the city would undoubtedly gain by it; but the people of the ward I represent have less interest in it than some others: they do not look far ahead, and they are jealous of those who would be more directly benefited than themselves; consequently I don't think that they would like it if I voted for it, and I shall not, but I hope it will be carried."

They were unwilling that even a stranger should have so poor an opinion of their own intelligence as to suppose that they did not see the advantage of the change proposed; but it was not even suggested to their minds that there might be something shameful in repudiating their obligations to serve, according to the best of their judgment, the general and permanent interests committed to them as legislators of the city.

It is evident that if we go on in this way, the progress of civilized mankind in health, virtue, and happiness will be seriously endangered.

It is practically certain that the Boston of today is the mere nucleus of the Boston that is to be. It is practically certain that it is to extend over many miles of country now thoroughly rural in character, in parts of which farmers are now laying out roads with a view to shortening the teaming distance between their wood lots and a railway station, being governed in their courses by old property lines, which were first run simply with reference to the equitable division of heritages, and in other parts of which, perhaps, some wild speculators are having streets staked off from plans which they have formed with a rule and pencil in a broker's office, with a view chiefly to the impressions they would make when seen by other

speculators on a lithographed map. And by this manner of planning, unless views of duty or of interest prevail that are not yet common, if Boston continues to grow at its present rate even for but a few generations longer, and then simply holds its own until it shall be as old as the Boston in Lincolnshire now is, more men, women, and children are to be seriously affected in health and morals than are now living on this Continent.

Is this a small matter—a mere matter of taste; a sentimental speculation?

It must be within the observation of most of us that where, in the city, wheelways originally twenty feet wide were with great difficulty and cost enlarged to thirty, the present width is already less nearly adequate to the present business than the former was to the former business; obstructions are more frequent, movements are slower and oftener arrested, and the liability to collision is greater. The same is true of sidewalks. Trees thus have been cut down, porches, bow-windows, and other encroachments removed, but every year the walk is less sufficient for the comfortable passing of those who wish to use it.

It is certain that as the distance from the interior to the circumference of towns shall increase with the enlargement of their popula-

tion, the less sufficient relatively to the service to be performed will be any given space between buildings.

In like manner every evil to which men are specially liable when living in towns, is likely to be aggravated in the future, unless means are devised and adapted in advance to prevent it.

Let us proceed, then, to the question of means, and with a seriousness in some degree befitting a question, upon our dealing with which we know the misery or happiness of many millions of our fellow-beings will depend.

We will for the present set before our minds the two sources of wear and corruption which we have seen to be remediable and therefore preventible. We may admit that commerce requires that in some parts of a town there shall be an arrangement of buildings, and a character of streets and of traffic in them which will establish conditions of corruption and of irritation, physical and mental. But commerce does not require the same conditions to be maintained in all parts of a town.

Air is disinfected by sunlight and foliage. Foliage also acts mechanically to purify the air by screening it. Opportunity and inducement to escape at frequent intervals from the confined and vitiated air of the commercial quarter, and to supply the lungs with air screened and puri-

fied by trees, and recently acted upon by sunlight, together with opportunity and inducement to escape from conditions requiring vigilance, wariness, and activity toward other men—if these could be supplied economically, our problem would be solved.

In the old days of walled towns all tradesmen lived under the roof of their shops, and their children and apprentices and servants sat together with them in the evening about the kitchen fire. But now that the dwelling is built by itself and there is greater room, the inmates have a parlor to spend their evenings in; they spread carpets on the floor to gain in quiet, and hang drapery in their windows and papers on their walls to gain in seclusion and beauty. Now that our towns are built without walls, and we can have all the room that we like, is there any good reason why we should not make some similar difference between parts which are likely to be dwelt in, and those which will be required exclusively for commerce?

Would trees, for seclusion and shade and beauty, be out of place, for instance, by the side of certain of our streets? It will, perhaps, appear to you that it is hardly necessary to ask such a question, as throughout the United States trees are commonly planted at the sides of streets. Unfortunately, they

are seldom so planted as to have fairly settled the question of the desirableness of systematically maintaining trees under these circumstances. In the first place, the streets are planned, wherever they are, essentially alike. Trees are planted in the space assigned for sidewalks, where at first, while they are saplings, and the vicinity is rural or suburban, they are not much in the way, but where, as they grow larger, and the vicinity becomes urban, they take up more and more space, while space is more and more required for passage. That is not all. Thousands and tens of thousands are planted every year in a manner and under conditions as nearly certain as possible either to kill them outright, or to so lessen their vitality as to prevent their natural and beautiful development, and to cause premature decrepitude. Often, too, as their lower limbs are found inconvenient, no space having been provided for trees in laying out the street, they are deformed by butcherly amputations. If by rare good fortune they are suffered to become beautiful, they still stand subject to be condemned to death at any time, as obstructions in the highway.*

*On the border of the first street laid out in the oldest town in New England, there yet stands what has long been known as "the Town Tree," its trunk having served for generations as a publication post for official notices. "The selectmen," having last year removed the lower branches of all the younger road-

What I would ask is, whether we might not with economy make special provision in some of our streets—in a twentieth or a fiftieth part, if you please, of all—for trees to remain as a permanent furniture of the city? I mean, to make a place for them in which they would have room to grow naturally and gracefully. Even if the distance between the houses should have to be made half as much again as it is required to be in our commercial streets, could not the space be afforded? Out of town space is not costly when measures to secure it are taken early. The assessments for benefit where such streets were provided for, would, in nearly all cases, defray the cost of the land required. The strips of ground reserved for the trees, six, twelve, twenty feet wide, would cost nothing for paving or flagging.

The change both of scene and of air which would be obtained by people engaged for the

side trees of the town, and thereby its chief beauty, have this year deliberately resolved that they would have this tree cut down, for no other reason, so far as appears in their official record, than that if two persons came carelessly together on the roadway side of it, one of them might chance to put his foot in the adjoining shallow street-gutter. It might cost ten dollars to deepen and bridge this gutter substantially. The call to arms for the Old French War, for the War of the Revolution, the war for the freedom of the seas, the Mexican War, and the War of the Rebellion, was first made in this town under the shade of this tree, which is an American elm, and, notwithstanding its great age, is perfectly healthy and almost as beautiful as it is venerable.

most part in the necessarily confined interior commercial parts of the town, on passing into a street of this character after the trees had become stately and graceful, would be worth a great deal. If such streets were made still broader in some parts, with spacious malls, the advantage would be increased. If each of them were given the proper capacity, and laid out with laterals and connections in suitable directions to serve as a convenient trunk-line of communication between two large districts of the town or the business center and the suburbs, a very great number of people might thus be placed every day under influences counteracting those with which we desire to contend.

These, however, would be merely very simple improvements upon arrangements which are in common use in every considerable town. Their advantages would be incidental to the general uses of streets as they are. But people are willing very often to seek recreation as well as receive it by the way. Provisions may indeed be made expressly for public recreations, with certainty that if convenient they will be resorted to.

We come then to the question : what accommodations for recreation can we provide which shall be so agreeable and so accessible as to be efficiently attractive to the great body of

citizens, and which, while giving decided gratification, shall also cause those who resort to them for pleasure to subject themselves, for the time being, to conditions strongly counteractive to the special enervating conditions of the town?

In the study of this question all forms of recreation may, in the first place, be conveniently arranged under two general heads. One will include all of which the predominating influence is to stimulate exertion of any part or parts needing it; the other, all which cause us to receive pleasure without conscious exertion. Games chiefly of mental skill, as chess, or athletic sports, as baseball, are examples of means of recreation of the first class, which may be termed that of *exertive* recreation; music and the fine arts generally of the second or *receptive* division.

Considering the first by itself, much consideration will be needed in determining what classes of exercises may be advantageously provided for. In the Bois de Boulogne there is a race-course; in the Bois de Vincennes a ground for artillery target-practice. Military parades are held in Hyde Park. A few cricket clubs are accommodated in most of the London parks, and swimming is permitted in the lakes at certain hours. In the New York Park, on the

other hand, none of these exercises are provided for or permitted, except that the boys of the public schools are given the use on holidays of certain large spaces for ball playing. It is considered that the advantage to individuals which would be gained in providing for them would not compensate for the general inconvenience and expense they would cause.

I do not propose to discuss this part of the subject at present, as it is only necessary to my immediate purpose to point out that if recreations requiring large spaces to be given up to the use of a comparatively small number are not considered essential, numerous small grounds so distributed through a large town that some one of them could be easily reached by a short walk from every house, would be more desirable than a single area of great extent, however rich in landscape attractions it might be. Especially would this be the case if the numerous local grounds were connected and supplemented by a series of trunk-roads or boulevards such as has already been suggested.

Proceeding to the consideration of receptive recreations, it is necessary to ask you to adopt and bear in mind a further subdivision, under two heads, according to the degree in which the average enjoyment is greater when a large congregation assembles for a purpose of receptive

recreation, or when the number coming together is small and the circumstances are favorable to the exercise of personal friendliness.

The first I shall term *gregarious*; the second, *neighborly*. Remembering that the immediate matter in hand is a study of fitting accommodations, you will, I trust, see the practical necessity of this classification.

Purely gregarious recreation seems to be generally looked upon in New England society as childish and savage, because, I suppose, there is so little of what we call intellectual gratification in it. We are inclined to engage in it indirectly, furtively, and with complication. Yet there are certain forms of recreation, a large share of the attraction of which must, I think, lie in the gratification of the gregarious inclination, and which, with those who can afford to indulge in them, are so popular as to establish the importance of the requirement.

If I ask myself where I have experienced the most complete gratification of this instinct in public and out of doors, among trees, I find that it has been in the promenade of the Champs Elysées. As closely following it I should name other promenades of Europe, and our own upon the New York parks. I have studiously watched the latter for several years. I have several times seen fifty thousand people

participating in them; and the more I have seen of them, the more highly have I been led to estimate their value as means of counteracting the evils of town life.

Consider that the New York Park and the Brooklyn Park are the only places in those associated cities where, in this eighteen hundred and seventieth year after Christ, you will find a body of Christians coming together, and with an evident glee in the prospect of coming together, all classes largely represented, with a common purpose, not at all intellectual, competitive with none, disposing to jealousy and spiritual or intellectual pride toward none, each individual adding by his mere presence to the pleasure of all others, all helping to the greater happiness of each. You may thus often see vast numbers of persons brought closely together, poor and rich, young and old, Jew and Gentile. I have seen a hundred thousand thus congregated, and I assure you that though there have been not a few that seemed a little dazed, as if they did not quite understand it, and were, perhaps, a little ashamed of it, I have looked studiously but vainly among them for a single face completely unsympathetic with the prevailing expression of good nature and light-heartedness.

Is it doubtful that it does men good to come together in this way in pure air and under the

light of heaven, or that it must have an influence directly counteractive to that of the ordinary hard, hustling working hours of town life?

You will agree with me, I am sure, that it is not, and that opportunity, convenient, attractive opportunity, for such congregation, is a very good thing to provide for, in planning the extension of a town.

I referred especially to the Champs Elysées, because the promenade there is a very old custom, not a fashion of the day, and because I must needs admit that this most striking example is one in which no large area of ground—nothing like a park—has been appropriated for the purpose. I must acknowledge, also, that the alamedas of Spain and Portugal supply another and very interesting instance of the same fact. You will observe, however, that small local grounds, such as we have said might be the best for most exertive recreations, are not at all adapted to receptive recreations of the type described.

One thing more under this head. I have but little personal familiarity with Boston customs; but I have lived or sojourned in several other towns of New England, as well as of other parts of the country, and I have never been long in any locality, south or north, east or west, without observing a *custom* of gregarious out-of-

door recreation in some miserably imperfect form, usually covered by a wretched pretext of a wholly different purpose, as perhaps, for instance, visiting a grave-yard. I am sure that it would be much better, less expensive, less harmful in all ways, more health-giving to body, mind, and soul, if it were admitted to be a distinct requirement of all human beings, and appropriately provided for.

I have next to see what opportunities are wanted to induce people to engage in what I have termed *neighborly* receptive recreations, under conditions which shall be highly counteractive to the prevailing bias to degeneration and demoralization in large towns. To make clearer what I mean, I need an illustration which I find in a familiar domestic gathering, where the prattle of the children mingles with the easy conversation of the more sedate, the bodily requirements satisfied with good cheer, fresh air, agreeable light, moderate temperature, snug shelter, and furniture and decorations adapted to please the eye, without calling for profound admiration on the one hand, or tending to fatigue or disgust on the other. The circumstances are all favorable to a pleasurable wakefulness of the mind without stimulating exertion; and the close relation of family life, the association of children, of mothers, of

lovers, or those who may be lovers, stimulate and keep alive the more tender sympathies, and give play to faculties such as may be dormant in business or on the promenade; while at the same time the cares of providing in detail for all the wants of the family, guidance, instruction, reproof, and the dutiful reception of guidance, instruction, and reproof, are, as matters of conscious exertion, as far as possible laid aside.

There is an instinctive inclination to this social, neighborly, unexertive form of recreation among all of us. In one way or another it is sure to be constantly operating upon those millions on millions of men and women who are to pass their lives within a few miles of where we now stand. To what extent it shall operate so as to develop health and virtue, will, on many occasions, be simply a question of opportunity and inducement. And this question is one for the determination of which for a thousand years we here today are largely responsible.

Think what the ordinary state of things to many is at this beginning of the town. The public is reading just now a little book in which some of your streets of which you are not proud are described.* Go into one of those red cross

* *Sybaris*, by the Rev. E. E. Hale.

streets any fine evening next summer, and ask how it is with their residents? Oftentimes you will see half a dozen sitting together on the door-steps, or, all in a row, on the curb-stones, with their feet in the gutter, driven out of doors by the closeness within; mothers among them anxiously regarding their children who are dodging about at their play, among the noisy wheels on the pavement.

Again, consider how often you see young men in knots of perhaps half a dozen in lounging attitudes rudely obstructing the sidewalks, chiefly led in their little conversation by the suggestions given to their minds by what or whom they may see passing in the street, men, women, or children, whom they do not know, and for whom they have no respect or sympathy. There is nothing among them or about them which is adapted to bring into play a spark of admiration, of delicacy, manliness, or tenderness. You see them presently descend in search of physical comfort to a brilliantly lighted basement, where they find others of their sort, see, hear, smell, drink, and eat all manner of vile things.

Whether on the curb-stones or in the dram-shops, these young men are all under the influence of the same impulse which some satisfy about the tea-table with neighbors and

wives and mothers and children, and all things clean and wholesome, softening and refining.

If the great city to arise here is to be laid out little by little, and chiefly to suit the views of land-owners, acting only individually, and thinking only of how what they do is to affect the value in the next week or the next year of the few lots that each may hold at the time, the opportunities of so obeying this inclination as at the same time to give the lungs a bath of pure sunny air, to give the mind a suggestion of rest from the devouring eagerness and intellectual strife of town life, will always be few to any, to many will amount to nothing.

But is it possible to make public provision for recreation of this class, essentially domestic and secluded as it is?

It is a question which can, of course, be conclusively answered only from experience. And from experience in some slight degree I shall answer it. There is one large American town, in which it may happen that a man of any class shall say to his wife, when he is going out in the morning: "My dear, when the children come home from school, put some bread and butter and salad in a basket, and go to the spring under the chestnut-tree where we found the Johnsons last week. I will join you there as soon as I can get away from the office. We

will walk to the dairyman's cottage and get some tea, and some fresh milk for the children, and take our supper by the brook-side"; and this shall be no joke, but the most refreshing earnest.

There will be room enough in the Brooklyn Park, when it is finished, for several thousand little family and neighborly parties to bivouac at frequent intervals through the summer, without discommoding one another, or interfering with any other purpose, to say nothing of those who can be drawn out to make a day of it, as many thousand were last year. And although the arrangements for the purpose were yet very incomplete, and but little ground was *at all* prepared for such use, besides these small parties, consisting of one or two families, there came also, in companies of from thirty to a hundred and fifty, somewhere near twenty thousand children with their parents, Sunday-school teachers, or other guides and friends, who spent the best part of a day under the trees and on the turf, in recreations of which the predominating element was of this neighborly receptive class. Often they would bring a fiddle, flute, and harp, or other music. Tables, seats, shade, turf, swings, cool spring water, and a pleasing rural prospect, stretching off half a mile or more each way, unbroken by a carriage road or the slightest

evidence of the vicinity of the town, were supplied them without charge, and bread and milk and ice cream at moderate fixed charges. In all my life I have never seen such joyous collections of people. I have, in fact, more than once observed tears of gratitude in the eyes of poor women, as they watched their children thus enjoying themselves.

The whole cost of such neighborly festivals, even when they include excursions by rail from the distant parts of the town, does not exceed from each person, on an average, a quarter of a dollar; and when the arrangements are complete, I see no reason why thousands should not come every day where hundreds come now to use them; and if so, who can measure the value, generation after generation, of such provisions for recreation to the over-wrought, much-confined people of the great town that is to be?

For this purpose neither of the forms of ground we have heretofore considered are at all suitable. We want a ground to which people may easily go after their day's work is done, and where they may stroll for an hour, seeing, hearing, and feeling nothing of the bustle and jar of the streets, where they shall, in effect, find the city put far away from them. We want the greatest possible contrast with the streets and

the shops and the rooms of the town which will be consistent with convenience and the preservation of good order and neatness. We want, especially, the greatest possible contrast with the restraining and confining conditions of the town, those conditions which compel us to walk circumspectly, watchfully, jealously, which compel us to look closely upon others without sympathy. Practically, what we most want is a simple, broad, open space of clean greensward, with sufficient play of surface and a sufficient number of trees about it to supply a variety of light and shade. This we want as a central feature. We want depth of wood enough about it not only for comfort in hot weather, but to completely shut out the city from our landscapes.

The word *park*, in town nomenclature, should, I think, be reserved for grounds of the character and purpose thus described.

Not only as being the most valuable of all possible forms of public places, but regarded simply as a large space which will seriously interrupt cross-town communication wherever it occurs, the question of the site and bounds of the park requires to be determined with much more deliberation and art than is often secured for any problem of distant and extended municipal interests.

A Promenade may, with great advantage, be carried along the outer part of the surrounding groves of a park ; and it will do no harm if here and there a broad opening among the trees discloses its open landscapes to those upon the promenade. But recollect that the object of the latter for the time being should be to see *congregated human life* under glorious and necessarily artificial conditions, and the natural landscape is not essential to them ; though there is no more beautiful picture, and none can be more pleasing incidentally to the gregarious purpose, than that of beautiful meadows, over which clusters of level-armed sheltering trees cast broad shadows, and upon which are scattered dainty cows and flocks of black-faced sheep, while men, women, and children are seen sitting here and there, forming groups in the shade, or moving in and out among the woody points and bays.

It may be inferred from what I have said, that very rugged ground, abrupt eminences, and what is technically called picturesque in distinction from merely beautiful or simply pleasing scenery, is not the most desirable for a town park. Decidedly not in my opinion. The park should, as far as possible, complement the town. Openness is the one thing you cannot get in buildings. Picturesqueness you can get. Let

your buildings be as picturesque as your artists can make them. This is the beauty of a town. Consequently, the beauty of the park should be the other. It should be the beauty of the fields, the meadow, the prairie, of the green pastures, and the still waters. What we want to gain is tranquillity and rest to the mind. Mountains suggest effort. But besides this objection there are others of what I may indicate as the house-keeping class. It is impossible to give the public range over a large extent of ground of a highly picturesque character, unless under very exceptional circumstances, and sufficiently guard against the occurrence of opportunities and temptations to shabbiness, disorder, indecorum, and indecency that will be subversive of every good purpose the park should be designed to fulfill.

Nor can I think that *in the park proper*, what is called gardenesque beauty is to be courted; still less that highly artificial and exotic form of it, which, under the name of subtropical planting, the French have lately introduced, and in suitable positions with interesting and charming results, but in following which indiscreetly, the English are sacrificing the peculiar beauty of their simple and useful parks of the old time. Both these may have places, and very important places, but they do not belong within a park,

unless as side scenes and incidents. Twenty years ago Hyde Park had a most pleasing, open, free, and inviting expression, though certainly it was too rude, too much wanting in art; but now art is vexed with long black lines of repellant iron-work, and here and there behind it bouquets of hot-house plants, between which the public pass like hospital convalescents, who have been turned into the yard to walk about while their beds are making. (We should undertake nothing in a park which involves the treating of the public as prisoners or wild beasts.) A great object of all that is done in a park; of *all* the art of a park, is to influence the mind of men through their imagination, and the influence of iron hurdles can never be good.

We have, perhaps, sufficiently defined the idea of a park for a large town. It will seldom happen that this ideal can be realized fully. The next thing is to select the situation in which it can be most nearly approached without great cost; and by cost I do not mean simply cost of land or of construction, but cost of inconvenience and cost of keeping in order, which is a very much more serious matter, and should have a great deal more study.

A park fairly well managed near a large town will surely become a new center of that town. With the determination of location, size, and

boundaries should therefore be associated the duty of arranging new trunk routes of communication between it and the distant parts of the town existing and forecasted.

These may be either narrow informal elongations of the park, varying say from two to five hundred feet in width, and radiating irregularly from it, or if, unfortunately, the town is already laid out in the unhappy way that New York and Brooklyn, San Francisco and Chicago, are, and, I am glad to say, Boston is not, on a plan made long years ago by a man who never saw a spring-carriage, and who had a conscientious dread of the Graces, then we must probably adopt formal parkways. They should be so planned and constructed as never to be noisy and seldom crowded, and so also that the straightforward movement of pleasure-carriages need never be obstructed, unless at absolutely necessary crossings, by slow-going heavy vehicles used for commercial purposes. If possible, also, they should be branched or reticulated with other ways of a similar class, so that no part of the town should finally be many minutes' walk from some one of them; and they should be made interesting by a process of planting and decoration, so that in necessarily passing through them, whether in going to or from the park, or to and from business, some substantial recreative advantage may

be incidentally gained. It is a common error to regard a park as something to be produced complete in itself, as a picture to be painted on canvas. It should rather be planned as one to be done in fresco, with constant consideration of exterior objects, some of them quite at a distance and even existing as yet only in the imagination of the painter.

I have thus barely indicated a few of the points from which we may perceive our duty to apply the means in our hands to ends far distant, with reference to this problem of public recreations. Large operations of construction may not soon be desirable, but I hope you will agree with me that there is little room for question, that reserves of ground for the purposes I have referred to should be fixed upon as soon as possible, before the difficulty of arranging them, which arises from private building, shall be greatly more formidable than now.

To these reserves—though not a dollar should be spent in construction during the present generation—the plans of private construction would necessarily, from the moment they were established, be conformed.

I by no means wish to suggest that nothing should be done for the present generation ; but only, that whatever happens to the present generation, it should not be allowed to go on

heaping up difficulties and expenses for its successors, for want of a little comprehensive and business-like foresight and study. In all probability it will be found that much can be done even for the present generation without greatly if at all increasing taxation, as has been found in New York.

But the question now perhaps comes up: How can a community best take this work in hand?

It is a work in which private and local and special interests will be found so antagonistic one to another, in which heated prejudices are so liable to be unconsciously established, and in which those who would be disappointed in their personal greeds by whatever good scheme may be studied out, are so likely to combine and concentrate force to kill it (manufacture public opinion, as the phrase is), that the ordinary organizations for municipal business are unsuitable agencies for the purpose. It would, perhaps, be a bold thing to say that the public in its own interest, and in the interest of all of whom the present public are the trustees, should see to it that the problem is as soon as possible put clean out of its own hands, in order that it may be taken up efficiently by a small body of select men. But I will venture to say that until this in effect is done, the danger that public

opinion may be led, by the application of industry, ingenuity, and business ability on the part of men whose real objects are perhaps unconsciously very close to their own pockets, to overrule the results of more comprehensive and impartial study, is much greater than in most questions of public interest.

You will not understand me as opposing or undervaluing the advantages of public discussion. What I would urge is, that park questions, and even the most elementary park questions, questions of site and outlines and approaches, are not questions to which the rule applies, that every man should look after his own interests, judge for himself what will favor his own interests, and exert his influence so as to favor them; but questions rather of that class, which in his private affairs every man of common sense is anxious, as soon as possible, to put into the hands of somebody who is able to take hold of them comprehensively as a matter of direct, grave, business responsibility.

It is upon this last point far more than upon any other that the experience of New York is instructive to other communities. I propose, therefore, to occupy your time a little while longer by a narration of those parts of this experience which bear most directly upon this

point, and which will also supply certain other information which has been desired of me.

The New York legislature of 1851 passed a bill providing for a park on the east side of the island. Afterwards, the same legislature, precipitately and quite as an after-thought, passed the act under which the city took title to the site of the greater part of the present Central Park.

This final action is said to have been the result of a counter movement, started after the passage of the first bill merely to gratify a private grudge of one of the city aldermen.

When, in the formation of the counter project, the question was reached, what land shall be named in the second bill, the originator turned to a map and asked: "*Now where shall I go?*" His comrade, looking over his shoulder, without a moment's reflection, put his finger down and said, "*Go there*"; the point indicated appearing to be about the middle of the island, and therefore, as it occurred to him, one which would least excite local prejudices.

The primary selection of the site was thus made in an off-hand way, by a man who had no special responsibility in the premises, and whose previous studies had not at all led him to be well informed or interested in the purpose of a park.

It would have been difficult to find another body of land of six hundred acres upon the island (unless by taking a long narrow strip upon the precipitous side of a ridge), which possessed less of what we have seen to be the most desirable characteristics of a park, or upon which more time, labor, and expense would be required to establish them.

But besides the topographical objections, when the work of providing suitable facilities for the recreation of the people upon this ground came to be practically and definitely considered, defects of outline were discerned, the incomplete remedy for which has since cost the city more than a million of dollars. The amount which intelligent study would have saved in this way if applied at the outset, might have provided for an amplification of some one of the approaches to the Park, such as, if it were now possible to be gained at a cost of two or three million dollars, I am confident would, if fairly set forth, be ordered by an almost unanimous vote of the taxpayers of the city. Public discussion at the time utterly failed to set this blundering right. Nor was public opinion then clearly dissatisfied with what was done or with those who did it.

During the following six years there was much public and private discussion of park questions; but the progress of public opinion, judged

simply by the standard which it has since formed for itself, seems to have been chiefly backward.

This may be, to a considerable degree, accounted for by the fact that many men of wealth and influence—who, through ignorance and lack of mature reflection on this subject, were unable to anticipate any personal advantage from the construction of a park—feared that it would only add to their taxes, and thus were led to form a habit of crying down any hopeful anticipations.

The argument that certain towns of the old country did obtain some advantage from their parks, could not be refuted, but it was easy to say, and it was said, that “our circumstances are very different: surrounded by broad waters on all sides, open to the sea breezes, we need no artificial breathing-places; even if we did, nothing like the parks of the old cities under aristocratic government would be at all practicable here.”

This assertion made such an impression as to lead many to believe that little more had better be done than to give the name of Park to the ground which it was now too late to avoid taking. A leading citizen suggested that nothing more was necessary than to plough up a strip just within the boundary of the ground and plant it with young trees, and chiefly with cuttings of the poplar, which afterwards, as

they came to good size, could be transplanted to the interior, and thus the Park would be furnished economically and quite well enough for the purposes it would be required to serve.

Another of distinguished professional reputation seriously urged through the public press that the ground should be rented as a sheep-walk. In going to and from their folds the flocks would be sure to form trails which would serve the public perfectly well for foot-paths; nature would in time supply whatever else was essential to form a quite picturesque and perfectly suitable strolling ground for such as would wish to resort to it.

It was frequently alleged, and with truth, that the use made of the existing public grounds was such as to develop riotous and licentious habits. A large park, it was argued, would inevitably present larger opportunities, and would be likely to exhibit an aggravated form of the same tendencies, consequently anything like refinement of treatment would be entirely wasted.

A few passages from a leading article of the "Herald" newspaper, in the seventh year of the enterprise, will indicate what estimate its astute editor had then formed of the prevailing convictions of the public on the subject:—

"It is all folly to expect in this country to have parks like those in old aristocratic countries. When we open a public park Sam will air himself in it. He will take

his friends whether from Church street, or elsewhere. He will knock down any better dressed man who remonstrates with him. He will talk and sing, and fill his share of the bench, and flirt with the nursery-maids in his own coarse way. Now we ask what chance have William B. Astor and Edward Everett against this fellow-citizen of theirs? Can they and he enjoy the same place? Is it not obvious that he will turn them out, and that the great Central Park will be nothing but a great bear-garden for the lowest denizens of the city, of which we shall yet pray litanies to be delivered?"

In the same article it was argued that the effect of the construction of the Park would be unfavorable to the value of property in its neighborhood, except as, to a limited extent, it might be taken up by Irish and German liquor dealers as sites for dram-shops and lager-bier gardens.

There were many eminent citizens, who to my personal knowledge, in the sixth, seventh, and eighth year after the passage of the act, entertained similar views to those I have quoted.

I have been asked if I supposed that "gentlemen" would ever resort to the Park, or would allow their wives and daughters to visit it? I heard a renowned lawyer argue that it was preposterous to suppose that a police force would do anything toward preserving order and decency in any broad piece of ground open to the general public of New York. And after the work began, I often heard the conviction ex-

pressed that if what was called the reckless, extravagant, inconsiderate policy of those who had the making of the Park in charge, could not be arrested, the weight of taxation and the general disgust which would be aroused among the wealthy classes would drive them from the city, and thus prove a serious injury to its prosperity.

"Why," said one, a man whom you all know by reputation, and many personally, "I should not ask for anything finer in my private grounds for the use of my own family." To whom it was replied that possibly grounds might not unwisely be prepared even more carefully when designed for the use of two hundred thousand families and their guests, than when designed for the use of one.

The constantly growing conviction that it was a rash and ill-considered undertaking, and the apprehension that a great deal would be spent upon it for no good purpose, doubtless had something to do with the choice of men, who in the sixth year were appointed, by the Governor of the State, commissioners to manage the work and the very extraordinary powers given them. At all events, it so happened that a majority of them were much better known from their places in the directory of banks, railroads, mining, and manufacturing enterprises, than

from their previous services in politics ; and their freedom to follow their own judgment and will, in respect to all the interior matters of the Park, was larger than had for a long time been given to any body of men charged with a public duty of similar importance.

I suppose that few of them knew or cared more about the subject of their duties at the time of their appointment, than most other active business men. They probably embodied very fairly the average opinion of the public, as to the way in which it was desirable that the work should be managed. If, then, it is asked, how did they come to adopt and resolutely pursue a course so very different from that which the public opinion seemed to expect of them, I think that the answer must be found in the fact that they had not wanted or asked the appointment; that it was made absolutely free from any condition or obligation to serve a party, a faction, or a person ; that owing to the extraordinary powers given them, their sense of responsibility in the matter was of an uncommonly simple and direct character, and led them with the trained skill of business men to go straight to the question : —

“ Here is a piece of property put into our hands. By what policy can we turn it to the best account for our stockholders ? ”

It has happened that instead of being turned out about the time they had got to know something about their special business, these commissioners have been allowed to remain in office to this time—a period of twelve years.

As to their method of work, it was as like as possible to that of a board of directors of a commercial corporation. They quite set at defiance the ordinary ideas of propriety applied to public servants, by holding their sessions with closed doors, their clerk being directed merely to supply the newspapers with reports of their acts. They spent the whole of the first year on questions simply of policy, organization, and plan, doing no practical work, as it was said, at all.

When the business of construction was taken hold of, they refused to occupy themselves personally with questions of the class which in New York usually take up nine-tenths of the time and mind of all public servants, who have it in their power to arrange contracts and determine appointments, promotions, and discharges. All of these they turned over to the heads of the executive operations.

Now, when these deviations from usage were conjoined with the adoption of a policy of construction for which the public was entirely unprepared, and to which the largest tax-payers

of the city were strongly opposed, when also those who had a variety of private axes to grind, found themselves and their influence, and their friends' influence, made nothing of by the commissioners, you may be sure that public opinion was manufactured against them at a great rate. The Mayor denounced them in his messages; the Common Council and other departments of the city government refused to coöperate with them, and were frequently induced to put obstructions in their way; they were threatened with impeachment and indictment; some of the city newspapers attacked them for a time in every issue; they were caricatured and lampooned; their session was once broken up by a mob, their business was five times examined (once or twice at great expense, lawyers, accountants, engineers, and other experts being employed for the purpose) by legislative investigating committees. Thus for a time public opinion, through nearly all the channels open to it, apparently set against them like a torrent.

No men less strong, and no men less confident in their strength than these men — by virtue in part of personal character, or in part of the extraordinary powers vested in them by the legislature, and in part by the accident of certain anomalous political circumstances — happened to be, could have carried through a

policy and a method which commanded so little immediate public favor. As it was, nothing but personal character, the common impression that after all they were honest, saved them. By barely a saber's length they kept ahead of their pursuers, and of this you may still see evidence here and there in the Park, chiefly where something left to stop a gap for the time being has been suffered to produce lasting defects. At one time nearly four thousand laborers were employed; and for a year at one point, work went on night and day in order to put it as quickly as possible beyond the reach of those who were bent on stopping it. Necessarily, under such circumstances, the rule obtains: "Look out for the main chance; we may save the horses, we must save the guns"; and if now you do not find everything in perfect parade order, the guns, at all events, were saved.

To fully understand the significance of the result so far, it must be considered that the Park is to this day, at some points, incomplete; that from the center of population to the midst of the Park the distance is still four miles; that there is no steam transit; that other means of communication are indirect and excessively uncomfortable, or too expensive. For practical every-day purposes to the great mass of the people, the Park might as well be a hundred

miles away. There are hundreds of thousands who have never seen it, more hundreds of thousands who have seen it only on a Sunday or holiday. The children of the city, to whom it should be of the greatest use, can only get to it on holidays or in vacations, and then must pay car-fare both ways.

It must be remembered, also, that the Park is not planned for such use as is now made of it, but with regard to the future use, when it will be in the center of a population of two millions hemmed in by water at a short distance on all sides; and that much of the work done upon it is, for this reason, as yet quite barren of results.

The question of the relative value of what is called off-hand common sense, and of special, deliberate, business-like study, must be settled, in the case of the Central Park, by a comparison of benefit with cost. During the last four years over thirty million visits have been made to the Park by actual count, and many have passed uncounted. From fifty to eighty thousand persons on foot, thirty thousand in carriages, and four to five thousand on horseback, have often entered it in a day.

Among the frequent visitors, I have found all those who, a few years ago, believed it impossible that there should ever be a park in this republican country, — and especially in New York, of

all places in this country,— which would be a suitable place of resort for “gentlemen.” They, their wives and daughters, frequent the Park more than they do the opera or the church.

There are many men of wealth who resort to the Park habitually and regularly, as much so as business men to their places of business. Of course, there is a reason for it, and a reason based upon their experience.

As to the effect on public health, there is no question that it is already great. The testimony of the older physicians of the city will be found unanimous on this point. Says one: “Where I formerly ordered patients of a certain class to give up their business altogether and go out of town, I now often advise simply moderation, and prescribe a ride in the Park before going to their offices, and again a drive with their families before dinner. By simply adopting this course as a habit, men who have been breaking down frequently recover tone rapidly, and are able to retain an active and controlling influence in an important business, from which they would have otherwise been forced to retire. I direct school girls, under certain circumstances, to be taken wholly, or in part, from their studies, and sent to spend several hours a day rambling on foot in the Park.”

The lives of women and children too poor to be sent to the country can now be saved in

thousands of instances, by making them go to the Park. During a hot day in July last, I counted at one time in the Park eighteen separate groups, consisting of mothers with their children, most of whom were under school age, taking picnic dinners which they had brought from home with them. The practice is increasing under medical advice, especially when summer complaint is rife.

The much greater rapidity with which patients convalesce, and may be returned with safety to their ordinary occupations after severe illness, when they can be sent to the Park for a few hours a day, is beginning to be understood. The addition thus made to the productive labor of the city is not unimportant.

The Park, moreover, has had a very marked effect in making the city attractive to visitors, and in thus increasing its trade, and causing many who have made fortunes elsewhere to take up their residence and become tax-payers in it,—a much greater effect in this way, beyond all question, than all the colleges, schools, libraries, museums, and art-galleries which the city possesses. It has also induced many foreigners who have grown rich in the country, and who would otherwise have gone to Europe to enjoy their wealth, to settle permanently in the city.

And what has become of the great Bugaboo? This is what the "Herald" of later date answers:—

"When one is inclined to despair of the country, let him go to the Central Park on a Saturday, and spend a few hours there in looking at the people, not at those who come in gorgeous carriages, but at those who arrive on foot, or in those exceedingly democratic conveyances, the street-cars; and if, when the sun begins to sink behind the trees, he does not arise and go homeward with a happy swelling heart," and so on, the effusion winding up thus: "We regret to say that the more brilliant becomes the display of vehicles and toilettes, the more shameful is the display of bad manners on the part of the ——— extremely fine-looking people who ride in carriages and wear the fine dresses. We must add that the pedestrians always behave well."

Here we touch a fact of more value to social science than any other in the history of the Park; but to fully set it before you would take an evening by itself. The difficulty of preventing ruffianism and disorder in a park to be frequented indiscriminately by such a population as that of New York, was from the first regarded as the greatest of all those which the commission had to meet and the means of overcoming it cost more study than all other things.

It is, perhaps, too soon to judge of the value of the expedients resorted to, but there are as yet a great many parents who are willing to trust their school-girl daughters to ramble with-

out special protection in the Park, as they would almost nowhere else in New York. One is no more likely to see ruffianism or indecencies in the Park than in the churches, and the arrests for offenses of all classes, including the most venial, which arise simply from the ignorance of country people, have amounted to but twenty in the million of the number of visitors; and of these, an exceedingly small proportion have been of that class which was so confidently expected to take possession of the Park and make it a place unsafe and unfit for decent people.

There is a good deal of delicate work on the Park, some of it placed there by private liberality—much that a girl with a parasol, or a boy throwing a pebble, could render valueless in a minute. Except in one or two cases where the ruling policy of the management has been departed from—cases which prove the rule—not the slightest injury from wantonness, carelessness, or ruffianism has occurred.

Jeremy Bentham, in treating of "The Means of Preventing Crimes," remarks that any innocent amusement that the human heart can invent is useful under a double point of view: first, for the pleasure itself which results from it; second, from its tendency to weaken the dangerous inclinations which man derives from his nature.

No one who has closely observed the conduct of the people who visit the Park can doubt that it exercises a distinctly harmonizing and refining influence upon the most unfortunate and most lawless classes of the city—an influence favorable to courtesy, self-control, and temperance.

At three or four points in the midst of the Park, beer, wine, and cider are sold with other refreshments to visitors, not at bars, but served at tables where men sit in company with women. Whatever harm may have resulted, it has apparently had the good effect of preventing the establishment of drinking-places on the borders of the Park, these not having increased in number since it was opened, as it was originally supposed they would.

I have never seen or heard of a man or woman the worse for liquor taken at the Park, except in a few instances where visitors had brought it with them, and in which it had been drank secretly and unsocially. The present arrangements for refreshments I should say are makeshift and most discordant with the design.

Every Sunday in summer from thirty to forty thousand persons, on an average, enter the Park on foot, the number on a very fine day being sometimes nearly a hundred thousand. While most of the grog-shops of the city were effect-

ally closed by the police under the excise law on Sunday, the number of visitors to the Park was considerably larger than before. There was no similar increase at the churches.

Shortly after the Park first became attractive, and before any serious attempt was made to interfere with the Sunday liquor trade, the head-keeper told me that he saw among the visitors the proprietor of one of the largest "saloons" in the city. He accosted him and expressed some surprise; the man replied, "I came to see what the devil you'd got here that took off so many of my Sunday customers."

I believe it may be justly inferred that the Park stands in competition with grog-shops and worse places, and not with the churches and Sunday-schools.

Land immediately about the Park, the frontage on it being seven miles in length, instead of taking the course anticipated by those opposed to the policy of the commission, has advanced in value at the rate of two hundred per cent per annum.

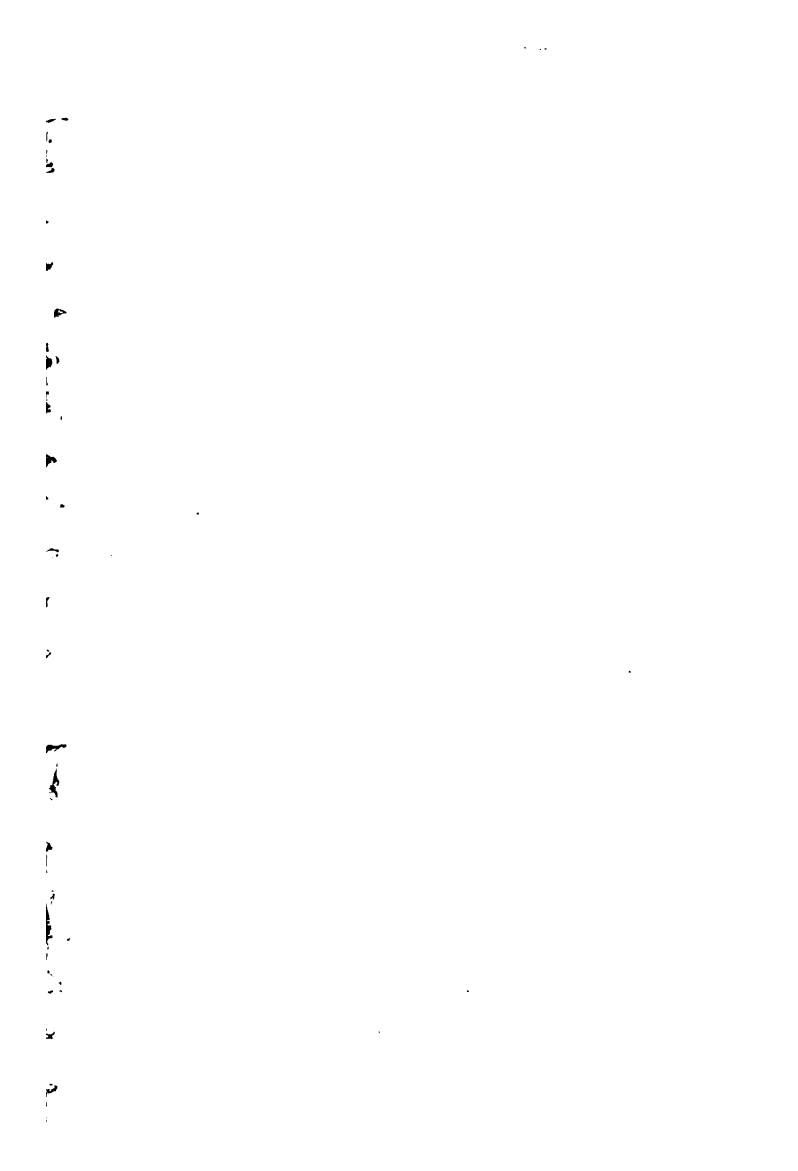
The cost of forming the Park, owing to the necessity of overcoming the special difficulties of the locality by extraordinary expedients, has been very great (\$5,000,000); but the interest on it would even now be fully met by a toll of three cents on visitors coming on foot, and six cents

on all others; and it should be remembered that nearly every visitor in coming from a distance voluntarily pays much more than this for the privilege.

It is universally admitted, however, that the cost, including that of the original off-hand common-sense blunders, has been long since much more than compensated by the additional capital drawn to the city through the influence of the Park.

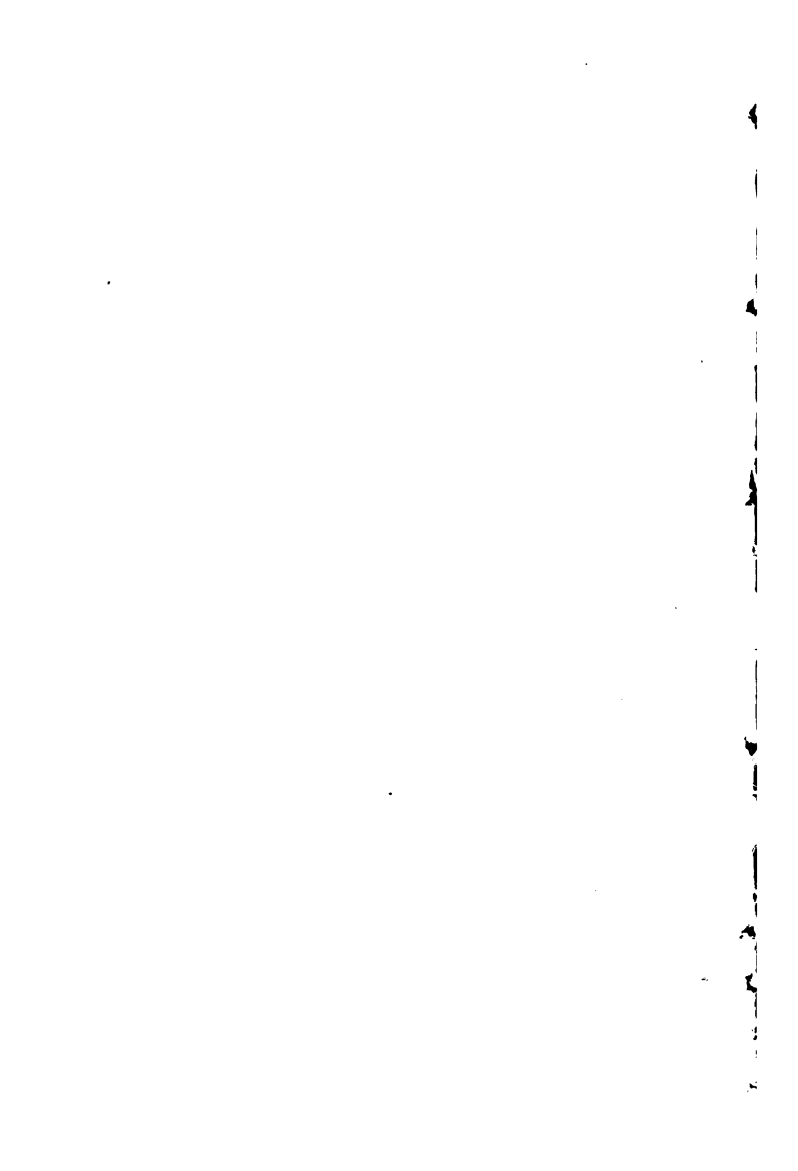
A few facts will show you what the change in public opinion has been. When the Commissioners began their work, six hundred acres of ground was thought by many of the friends of the enterprise to be too much, by none too little for all park purposes. Since the Park has come into use, the amount of land laid out and reserved for parks in the two principal cities on the bay of New York has been increased to more than three times that amount, the total reserve for parks alone now being about two thousand acres, and the public demand is now for more, not less. Twelve years ago there was almost no pleasure-driving in New York. There are now, at least, ten thousand horses kept for pleasure-driving. Twelve years ago there were no roadways adapted to light carriages. There are now fourteen miles of rural drive within the parks complete and in use, and

1871





THE JUSTIFYING VALUE OF
A PUBLIC PARK



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After the Paper now to be read had been mainly prepared, I was advised of a wish that it might lead on to a discussion of the subject of parks at low cost for small towns. The topic which I had adopted being a more comprehensive one, I will introduce it by a few observations, showing how the question of cost for parks of any class, for towns large or small, cannot well be discussed independently of it.

The cost of a park depends on two considerations back of economy of management; back, also, of a plan as commonly understood: the first is the use intended to be made of it, or the general aims of the undertaking; the second, the degree in which the site to be improved is adapted to these aims. As to the first, it is liable to be overlooked that the aims of a park may be so low that the result will be of less value than no park at all. This has been proved over and over again. As to adaptation of site, it is also liable to be forgotten that a hundred acres of land in one situation may be turned, at a given cost, into a more useful park than two hundred in another; and that two hundred acres of land, of one sort, may be pre-

pared for a given use, of a given population, at less cost than one hundred of another sort.

These considerations being recognized, the special perplexity of park business will be understood to lie in the fact that, whatever determinations as to use you set out with, whatever aims control your choice of site and your plan of improvements, whatever rules for economy you fix upon, you have no assurance in law, custom or public common sense, that they will not soon be thrown overboard. This, again, being understood, it will not be difficult to realize that the great danger to be guarded against in setting about a park, is one which is commonly disguised under the phrase, "practical business tact," or "practical common-sense," meaning a habit of mind, cultivated in commercial life, of judging values by the market estimate. What answers to the market estimate, in park values, is commonly a guess as to what the public will think of the results of a proposed operation at a time when these results, although the operation shall be apparently complete, are yet immature, provisional, and tentative; and, as in this condition, they will be regarded from the point of view, not of commercial competition, but of mental relaxation. Under these circumstances, most important elements of value are liable to be wholly disregarded.

For example, in any well designed park-work, the character of each of several parts is largely determined with a motive (over and above any that appears in the work as seen by itself) of enhancing the value of all other parts, and of gaining enhancement of value by the character to be given all other parts. Again, much the larger share of the value to be ultimately earned by the park depends on the gradual merging together of elements of value originally detached, and which, as seen in this detached condition (as they must be for years after work has apparently ceased with reference to them), show nothing, and to most minds, suggest nothing of the value which they potentially possess.

These, I think, are two plain reasons, but as it happens to apply more directly to my main purpose, I should like to refer also to another embarrassment of the ordinary pleasure-seeker's judgment, which is not so plain. I may, indeed, be excused for doubting if, in this scientific audience, there are many who suspect the degree in which considerations of stability and endurance enter into any sound estimate of the value of park-work, or who realize in what manner these elements of value may be represented in objects which, to the mind seeking relaxation, exhibit qualities of an entirely different character; objects of little more apparent

stability than the maize in the farmer's field, which next month is to be cleared of it, and ploughed over for a spring sowing of oats. So few are prepared to accept what is sound in this respect, and it has so much to do with the question, what it is worth while for a small but promising town to undertake in a park, and of what is low cost with reference to it, that I beg to offer a little evidence bearing on the point.

It is more than two hundred years since Mr. Pepys wrote of going in his new coach to the King's Park, and of the "innumerable appearance of gallants," which he there found, "sauntering among the trees." Of those trees it is possible that some have not yet succumbed to the acrid atmosphere of London. It is certain that many held their own long enough, and were enough valued, to preserve the general outlines and surface of the park against all suggestions of change, and thus indirectly to influence the leading lines of miles of streets, and establish the position of later park plantings, of which we now have the result. What had then been done, determines where today shade shall be found, where prospects screened or opened, where millions of men and women are yet to direct their steps. Mr. Pepys's road is still in use, and not many years ago it was plainly to be seen where its grade was affected,

its breadth contracted, and its course deflected, out of respect to a single tree which he probably saw as a sapling, the trunk and roots of which had grown into it. Of most of the bridges, conduits, markets, and landing-places of London of that period, only curious fragments remain. The King's Park was never as much, or as well used as it is at present, and for the purposes of its most important use, has few substantial advantages or disadvantages not to be traced to determinations formed long, long ago; when London, in comparison with its present state, was a very small town.

In Paris, the series of groves and greens which lie between the ruins of the Tuileries and the long-since leveled gate toward the Woods of Boulogne had its beginning as far back, at least, as the sixteenth century, when, as we now reckon, Paris, also, was a small town; and no motive has had more weight in determining the plan of the great town growing from it, than that of sparing and providing for the extension and uninterrupted use of these grounds.

The present town park of Dijon was laid out by Le Nôtre before these waters of Saratoga had been tasted by a white man, and its plan is as different from any modern park as the personal costume of that day differs from that we are wearing. But, visiting it not long since,

I found the town forester following orders which Le Nôtre had given, and the ground better realizing the pictures which must have been in his mind, than it could possibly have done while he lived. The roads, walks, seats; the verdant carpets, the leafy vistas—in none of these had the original work lost value. Never before were they as well adapted to their designed use, or worth as much for it. Where is the public building of the same date, of which, as a town property, the same can be said?

Most old, large towns would supply some like evidence. There are woody resorts in Rome which have been woody resorts from the time of the Cæsars. The Mount of Olives still serves as a place of retreat from the confinement and bustle of the streets of Jerusalem, and its present groves are believed to have sprung from the roots of trees planted centuries before the summer days when the humble friends of a certain unpractical Jew were apt to look for him among the afternoon strollers under their shade.

There is no people in the world who would take more honest and respectable pride in having their work done with a view to considerations of intrinsic and lasting value than our own; but it is at present impossible that

the impression we casually form of our inceptive park-work shall take fairly into account its substantial merits or shortcomings. Parks, of all things, should not be taken hold of as frontier expedients. Makeshift, temporizing, catch-penny work upon them is always extravagant work. The men hitherto more directly in trust of our parks have not been specially prone to the trading view of them. Though raw in respect to park service, they have usually been high-minded servants of the public. But they have been constrained by public opinion to waste much of what their free judgment would secure, and there is but one way in which the difficulty can be got over. It is by bringing public opinion itself to take a larger interest in the lasting conditions of accruing value in a park; and experience suggests that this is of even more importance, and of greater difficulty, in small towns, and in regard to parks for moderate use, than with respect to undertakings the magnitude and costliness of which is better fitted to affect the imagination in this respect.

One of the chemists engaged in the discussion of this Association on the subject of the Adulterations of Food, the other night, said that all were agreed that everything should be known in the market by its own name: that if we wanted glucose we should not have to take it

with the name of sugar; if oleomargarine, not as butter. There is a difficulty in discussing questions of cost and value in parks, lying in the fact that the public is so far from a common understanding of what the unadulterated substance of a park may be. If I now proceed upon my own notion in this respect, I may be met, as a dealer once told me that he had been by a young housekeeper who complained that if she left the stuff which he sold her for milk to stand a little while "a nasty yellow scum rose on it." "So it always does, madam, on good milk." "Never, sir," she rejoined, "never, on what I call milk."

I have lately known the word "park" applied to the protecting belt of a reservoir, to a fish-pond, a sea beach, and a jail yard; to scores of things which have the least possible of public interest in common. I have seen a low rocky shore having what I regard as park-value beyond estimate, in tints, lights, and shadows, and reflections of translucent and opaque foliage over rippling water, and full of poetic mystery—of beauty such as no painter can render. I have seen such a shore so changed that the water lay dead upon a wall of raw stone, capped by an inclined plane of turf; all possible architectural beauty lost through meaningless meanderings; all value which might

have been in simple breadth of turf, destroyed by pinning it down with prim pegs of living spruce and arbor vitæ. And this result I have heard praised as park-like.

Therefore, I had begun my paper (which I now reach) with some observations on this point, recalling the fact that while the few public properties which had the name of park with us, twenty-five years ago, did not differ from others known as greens, commons, or yards; yet the word had a meaning by no other so well given. Scores of times I have heard plain country people, Northern and Southern, Eastern and Western, describe something they had seen as "park-like," or "pretty as a park," or as "a perfect natural park." It might be Blue Ridge table-lands, oak openings further west, mesquit-grass prairies beyond the Trinity, or passages of the Genessee Flats or Connecticut Bottoms. What did the word mean? Nothing in the least practical. It reported nothing of the soil, of the water-power, of quarries, or quartz lodes. It told of a certain influence of *conditions solely of scenery* — soothing and reposeful influences. If we trace back this use of the word, it will carry us to the immigrations of the early part of the seventeenth century, before the replanting of English parks under the urgings of Evelyn, the Royal Society, and the Admiralty,

when there were generally broader spaces of greensward within them, and yet more of spacious seclusion from all without than even at present.

I beg that this significance of the word may be kept in mind a little while.

Twenty-five years ago we had no parks, park-like or otherwise, which might not better have been called something else. Since then a class of works so called has been undertaken which, to begin with, are at least spacious, and which hold possibilities of all park-like qualities. Upon twenty of these works in progress there has been thus far expended upwards of forty millions of dollars—well nigh if not fully fifty millions—and this figure does not tell the whole story of cost, as I will later show. Considering that in none of the towns making this outlay the necessity of a park was a little while ago at all felt, a remarkable progress of public demand is thus manifested. It will be found the more remarkable when it is considered that, in all Europe, but one notable public park had been laid out in the first half of this century; that this was formed on ground previously a royal hunting park, not by the government of the town, not by taxing the town, and not with an eye single to the town's advantage. But to see the full significance of the

fact it is further necessary to consider that within the same period, since 1850, as many parks have been laid out for the people of large towns in Europe as with us, and that the area which has been for the first time legally and definitely appropriated to that end is larger there than here. What has been secured for London alone is of greater extent than all the town parks of America together.* At the same time there has been a radical change in the management of many of the old parks.

Allow me to use the term *park movement*, with reference to what has thus recently occurred on both continents. With us, it dates from Mr. Downing's writings on the subject in 1849. But these could not have obtained the public attention they did, nor have proved the seed of so large a harvest, but for their timeliness, and a condition of expectancy in the soil upon which they fell.

Our first act of park legislation was in 1851. In 1853, the first Commissioners for the Central Park entered upon their duties. It was only in the latter year that some ill-considered steps were taken toward supplying Paris with its first public park. It was not till 1855 that Mr. Alphand came from Bordeaux, and gave the work its final form and impetus. A little

*Chiefly in recent action in respect to Epping Forest.

earlier, three small park undertakings had been entered upon in England, the leading one under the direction of Paxton, afterwards Sir Joseph. I know of none in Germany, Italy, or Belgium; but a few years afterward, I saw in each of these countries evidence that, about the same time, planting and gardening for the public benefit had taken new life.

Parks have plainly not come as the direct result of any of the great inventions or discoveries of the century. They are not, with us, simply an improvement on what we had before, growing out of a general advance of the arts applicable to them. It is not evident that the movement was taken up in any country from any other, however it may have been influenced or accelerated. It did not run like a fashion. It would seem rather to have been a common, spontaneous movement of that sort which we conveniently refer to the "Genius of Civilization."

I do not take this way of disposing of the question of its origin, impulse, and aim, which I will discuss later. I wish here only that the reflection may be made that a widespread popular movement is not, naturally, all at once perfectly clear-headed, coherent, and perspicuous in its demands. In other words, it is hardly to be supposed that the popular demand repre-

sented in parks has yet taken the fully mature, self-conscious form of thoroughly reasoned purposes and principles, and has insisted on an accurate embodiment of them in the works ordered. It is more reasonable to assume that it has not.

I wish to present this assumption in a practical form. Let me suppose that a man has become possessed, near a town, of adjoining properties comprising one or two farms, with marsh land, wood-land, pastures, mill-pond, quarry and brick-yard. It is crossed by roads, upon which there is some pleasure-driving; the pond is used for skating, the hill-sides for coasting, the pastures for kite-flying, base-ball and target-firing; snipe are shot in the marshes, rabbits trapped in the woods. There are neglected private properties so used for recreation by the public near most of our towns. Now, suppose that the man dies, leaving an infant heir; twenty years afterwards the heir dies, and the entire property is to come by will to the town on condition that the town spends half a million dollars to make it a park. Suppose the old roads are improved and furnished with sidewalks and shade trees; the brickyard fitted for a parade ground, the marsh for a rifle range; and that the quarry, with masonry and gates added, becomes a town reservoir. Part of the ground is taken for a cemetery; a statue of the former owner is set

on the highest hill; a museum and public library take the place of the homestead; an armory is provided, a hospital, poor-house, high school, conservatory, camera-obscura, prospect tower, botanic and zoological garden, archery, lawn-tennis and croquet-grounds, billiard-house, skating-rink, racket court, ten-pin alley, riding-school, Turkish bath, mineral springs, restaurants, pagodas, pavilions, and a mall, terrace, and concert garden. Suppose that the town has spent its half million, several times over, in these things, and that the courts can have found reason (I know not how) to decide that the condition of the bequest has been complied with. Suppose that a due part of all the town outlay in the premises has been set down in the town books to old accounts, so far as applicable, as to account of waterworks, street improvements, schools, hospitals, and so on; and that, after all, there is found something which must be charged under the new head of "parks."

Now, suppose that a question is raised whether this expenditure has been made in good faith, with reference to the proper objects and distinctive value of a park, and has been judiciously and economically directed, and that a popular judgment (not a technical court judgment) is asked upon this issue, what would be the result? Few men would have a sufficiently clear idea of the objects and the conditions of value of a

park to form a judgment; those who had would differ widely in their ideas, and most of the more judicial and properly leading minds would hold such ideas as they had with enough of doubt to make them slow either to fully support or decisively condemn those responsible. This, unquestionably, would be the case much more than it would in regard to any other large matter of town expenditure.

Let this unreadiness of popular judgment be considered for a moment in connection with certain faults in our methods of public business. This Association needs no explanation of them. It is sufficient to say that changes in the fundamental laws of our parks, in the boards governing them, or in the bodies governing these boards, occur annually. A certain weakness of human nature, usually exhibited in some degree after such changes, is expressed in the proverb, "New brooms sweep clean." There is generally a disposition with each new man in office to find an *ex post facto* reason for his being there. In the absence of any restraint, such as lies with reference to other public works, in a definite and well established public understanding of what is to be accomplished, there is nothing to prevent a novice in a park board, or in the office of mayor, comptroller, or member of city council, from aiming to make changes of organization, and to force a course of operations

adapted to discountenance some of the aims of work previously done, and with this motive to lay waste what funds under the same trust had before been used to obtain. There have already been such cases. In one a large outlay has been made, and the money is claimed to have been honestly used, with the unquestionable intent of nullifying what at least half a million dollars had been previously spent to gain. It has happened more than once that plans have been adopted, work advanced under them, then thrown aside by new men, new plans adopted, and, after some years, these in their turn abandoned, and the original plans resumed. The change of purpose in such cases will have been deliberate and intentional. But changes as great and as wasteful are more likely to occur through the passing of park works under the control, direct or indirect, of men who, through simple ignorance, forgetfulness, or indifference to such aims as have before-time been had in view, let a large share of the value that has been once secured slip through their fingers.*

* In the short history of one of our parks, a change in the immediate direction of the plantations has occurred not less than six times, and in each case the new appointee has shown a disposition to upset the methods of his predecessor, and twice, at least, such changes have been thus accomplished, amounting to serious changes of general design. Upon another park, for which I am supposed to have some responsibility, the resident professional superintendent was changed five times in three years.

But now, if I have suggested the special hazard, under our special political customs, of the lack of a well-understood central and distinctive purpose in the management of these large town properties, I wish to add that, back of this, but closely united with it, there is a more positive and a deeper seated difficulty. Briefly, it is the difficulty of dispossessing the mind of ideas which are associated with an object when, through lapse of time and change of circumstances, the nature of that object and its conditions of value have been radically changed. This difficulty, in individual experience, is not an uncommon one, but, with regard to this matter of parks, it is largely a transmitted experience, and I can think of no quite parallel case by which to explain it.

Its full elucidation would carry me into a history of a class of property unknown with us, but which, throughout the Old World, has for many centuries been of importance. Its value has been in two kinds: forest materials and game. It has been managed with reference to each, systematically, by classes of men specially trained to their duties, and since no other equally extensive property has had so much of what is called sentimental value, as to none has service been so much handed down from father to son, and as to none have traditional ideas been more

persistent. There are many thousands of such properties, of which the character and methods of management and use have changed little since the period of the Crusades. In England they are mostly called parks, and there the changes have been greater, as a rule, than on the continent. Still, in some essential particulars, the sentiment of conservatism with regard to them, not only with their owners for the time being, but with the people at large, is very strong.

Some few of these old forest and hunting properties, once belonging to kings, and situated near growing towns, came after a time to be used by the townspeople for their own amusement, much as neglected private lands near our towns often are now. Gradually such use of them established something like a vested right, and so, by very slow degrees, from kings' parks they came to be regarded as at least pseudo-public parks.

I say by slow degrees. A single fact will indicate how slowly, and suggest, with reference to their management, how imperfectly. That great park which we know so well for its Merry Wives' recreations, with its antlered stags in waiting for royal hunting parties, its phantom huntsman, its foresters' saw-pits with children hiding in them, is now surrounded with towns and

villages, and is an important feature of suburban London. It is nearer to the West End than Long Branch to the Battery, and is accessible by boats and three lines of railway, running cheap excursion trains. It is an object not simply of town but of national pride. In its use and value as a public park, a thousand times more than anything else, lies the proper concern of government with it. Yet, as late as four years ago, the only allusion to it as a public park, in the stated report to Parliament of the commissioner in charge, was contained in two lines, in which the extent to which it is used for public recreation is mentioned as a reason why the commissioner cannot make a better return from the sale of timber and other forest products, the letting of pasturage, and so on. It will be remembered, also, that yet every year a somewhat ridiculous public ceremony is performed in this park, called a hunt with the royal hounds, in which a venerable stag is turned out of a wagon and set after with great outcry, but with special precautions against his being seriously hurt when overtaken. These two facts suggest the degree in which the ancient theory of the use, value and economic management of this property has had influence with those in charge of it down to this very day.

Hyde Park, which may be considered as more particularly the progenitor of modern public parks, is now in the midst of London (the town having grown around it since the time of Mr. Pepys). But Hyde Park was classed with Windsor and under the same management when I visited it, only thirty years ago. I believe that it was transferred to a special commission, appointed, not by the local authorities, but by Parliament, at the time of the first International Exhibition, but, though the deer and kennels have been removed, some of the rangers or gamekeepers are still living upon it and there is an attractive private residence in the middle of it, with stables and gardens, occupied by a gentleman who represents the office corresponding for this park to that held for Woodstock Chase by The Loyal Lee in the seventeenth century, as described by Scott.

One of the two great parks of Paris was an imperial forest and hunting ground as late as 1850, the other still later. The public park of Florence was the grand duke's private property until the last revolution. The greater part of it is a dense wood, managed on the principles of economic forestry. The park of Munich, which people say was laid out by Rumford as a sanitary measure, is of the same character; it is still stocked with deer for the king's hunting,

and its resident superintendent is a game-keeper, as his father was before him. I saw him inspecting the repair of roads after a storm; he carried a gun in his hand, and was followed by aged hounds.

The names of the parks of Berlin and Stockholm indicate what they have been, each, in a different language, meaning a place for keeping deer.

I could show from facts of personal observation how, much more than it is easy to realize, the present condition of even the most changed of these old parks has thus been determined by motives as foreign to the forms of recreation in which their public value now lies, as the motives of a cotton mill are from those of a cathedral, and how the customs of management and of use now prevailing, have been, *per force*, largely fitted to these traditional motives. Also, how some of these customs, foreign in every sense to us, have lately emigrated and are crowding out that which is natural to us and belongs to our common sense.

I hope I have said enough to make it plain that during the long process through which the present ideas of the value of a park were gaining upon those which they have at last mainly superseded, the public demands, expectations, and standards of value in respect to these grounds

have been mixed, inconsistent, and contradictory. This being realized, it will next be evident that the inherited and transmitted idea of a public park has been one of a body of land held for no clearly defined purposes, which is equivalent to saying, held for purposes always remaining to be determined. It also follows that the inherited and transmitted idea of the responsibilities of those in immediate direction of these parks has been a corresponding one, and that they have been little subject to popular criticism based on fixed, just, and sound principles applicable to public recreation.

Lastly, it follows that the idea fitted to the word park in our minds, when, twenty-two years ago, we began, here in America, dealing with the subject—having come to us much less from anything that we had seen, or from any dictionary, than through that marvelous process of race nutrition which gives every man his native tongue—was an idea largely made up of irreconcilable impressions.

The fact remains to be more distinctly emphasized, that it is only through the use of this word of vague and inconstant significance that any limit has been placed upon the purposes to which public money, appropriated to parks, shall be applied.

The simplest statement of purpose that courts would unhesitatingly accept or public opinion

stand agreed upon, and, even then, not as a complete statement, but only as true so far as it goes, would be this: "A public park is a ground appropriated to public recreation."

Observe, then, that most of the public properties known as parks contain provisions for other purposes than recreation, and even opposed to recreation. Again, waiving the question how far these are legitimate parts of them, observe that recreation is so broad a term, and means so much more to some than to others, that to devote public funds to recreation is little less than to give a free rein to the personal tastes, whims and speculations of those intrusted with the administration of them.

We must fall back on usage. What, then, does usage prescribe?

In one European public park we find a race-course, with its grand-stand, stables, pool-room, and betting ring; in another, popular diversions of the class which we elsewhere look to Barnum to provide. In one there is a theater with ballet-dancing; in another, soldiers firing field-pieces at a target, with a detail of cavalry to keep the public at a distance.

Attempts to introduce like provisions in several of our American parks have been resisted under the personal conviction that they would tend to subvert their more important purpose. In some

of our parks, nevertheless, arrangements have been made for various games; concerts and shows have been admitted; there have been military parades; and it is impossible to find any line of principle between many favored and neglected propositions.

Usage, therefore, in this respect, decides nothing.

Asking what usage prescribes as to the simpler forms of recreation, we shall find that one ground, classed among public parks, consists of dense woods, with a few nearly straight roads through it, while others have open, pastoral landscapes, with circuitous drives, rides, and walks; that the interest of one centers in an extremely artificial display of exotics and bedding plants, while another bids fair to be equally distinguished for its fountains, monuments, statues, and other means of recreation in stone, concrete, and bronze. Yet another is so natural and unsophisticated you can hardly use it in dry weather without choking with dust, or in wet weather without wading in mud.

Again, usage determines nothing.

What this laxity leaves us liable to, and how much may be safely presumed upon the public's confusion of mind, is shown by the fact that in one case, when local opposition was found to be inconveniently strong against the location of a

smallpox hospital anywhere else, the difficulty was overcome by placing it in the midst of a park.

I have known orders given in a park, and carried out at considerable expense, the motive and origin of which could be explained only by reference to an idiosyncrasy of that class which, to some men, causes eggs or strawberries to be loathsome, and makes cats or curs objects of an irresistible, undefined terror.

The choice of site of most of our parks, and the definition of their boundaries, have been made without the slightest regard for any object of a park except, possibly, that of securing an air space. Even as with a view to air spaces the locality, in some cases, is nearly the last that should have been selected, and the area taken much broader and greatly more costly than necessary to the purpose.

No one can for a moment suppose that the state of public opinion exemplified in the facts which have been stated is one favorable to securing what the public most wants in a park, or, if at all, to its obtaining it at reasonable cost:

But the true state of the case will not be fully realized without taking into account certain elements of possible cost of a park which have hitherto had little general consideration.

A town is built to meet the demands of commerce—of commerce in a large sense. As these demands successively arise and their pressure is felt, street is added to street, building to building; railroads, canals and docks are introduced; sewers, water-pipes and gaslights are pushed out here and there, and thus, not only the extent but the direction of the town's growth is in a large degree controlled by natural laws, the acts of government following, much more than leading, directing, or resisting, the movements of supply and demand.

It will be evident that this element of security against injudicious municipal enterprise applies not at all to our great park trusts. A town does not grow into parks, as it does, by the law of its existence, into buildings and streets; on the contrary, when a great body of land is used as a park in the borders of a town, it will be a serious disturbance of what would otherwise be the natural development of the town.

See, for illustration, how Hyde Park has elbowed out the streets of London. See how the street system of Paris has been kept from its natural development because Catherine de Medici turned a tile-yard into a pleasure; or, to take the nearest example, see how the park of New York brings suddenly to a full stop more than ninety streets, which would otherwise con-

stitute forty thoroughfares of commerce, at the very center of an island which may yet be the most important point of commercial transfer in the world.

That when land is to be bought, or even accepted as a free gift, by a town for a park, its adaptation to the purpose of a park should first of all be considered, and that then none and no more should be taken than is necessary, or at least desirable, for that purpose, will be conceded.

A little consideration, then, will satisfy the Association that a large proportion of the objects which are more or less provided for in our parks might, at less cost and greater value, be provided for in a series of smaller grounds placed as nearly as practicable at regular distances through or around the town.

The argument is briefly this: That such scattered, smaller grounds would be more accessible; would less embarrass other interests of the town; would less interfere with its natural development; would involve less contention with local jealousies and consequent wasteful compromises; and would, on the whole, be less costly.

There is, however, an important element of value in most parks which could not be well provided for in such small local grounds.

What is desirable in this respect is a long, unbroken, spacious drive, ride, and walk, offering suitable conditions to a large number of people to obtain together moderate exercise in the open air, with such other conditions favorable to gayety as can be conveniently associated with them.

To a great many persons, perhaps the most of those who have much active influence upon the management of parks, the value of a park lies mainly, and to some it would seem exclusively, in the advantages it offers in this respect. Yet, as affecting these advantages, it will be obvious that the larger part of every park is waste land. Besides which, regarding this object from a point of view commonly taken by many intelligent people, and taking it up as a professional problem, it is little less than absurd to say that it might not be much better met, and at less cost, than it ever has been on any park, new or old. Indeed, from the accounts we have, it would seem that in some southern towns it has been so taken up, not in as clear-headed and bold a way as it might have been, but sufficiently to demonstrate that a result is easily attainable better adapted to the end in view than any we have hoped to attain in our parks.

An arrangement of the general type of the Spanish alamedas, developed with anything like

the enterprise and outlay which we have been willing to put on our parks, would, for the purpose in question, be more commodious ; its use simpler and more easily and efficiently regulated ; there would be less liability to accidents upon it ; it might be more effectively decorated ; and thus in every way be made to present a gayer, more brilliant and festive scene.

Such an affair, without making half as great a break in our towns as, sooner or later, their parks will, would open a splendid field for the great and admirable enterprise, erudition and skill, which are now given to decorative gardening — a perfectly suitable field for it, which a park seldom offers. It would give fine show room for all the novelties of the market, and would allow a fine scenic arrangement to be made of the superb tropical and sub-tropical beauties which are just now in fashion, and the best use possible of floral ribbons, embroidery and gew-gaudry which, after doing their worst to degrade and destroy art in landscape gardening, are now, if not wholly going out of fashion, I am glad to say, tending to lapse more nearly to their proper places.

With these advantages, it would cost not nearly as much for land, for construction, for maintenance, or in readjustment of the natural plan of a town.

But, plainly, it is not for this that the "Genius of Civilization" has called for these broad spaces termed parks. In what, then, shall we find the originating impulse, aim, and justification of the park-movement?

May we not, perhaps, wisely seek an answer to this question by considering whether there are any other movements of our times with which the park-movement, as we know it, may seem to be related?

If I was right in saying that twenty-five years ago, when we began discussing parks as something to be made for us, the leading idea popularly attached to the word, throughout this country, was one of certain influences of scenery—soothing and reposeful influences—then it is reasonable to suppose that there was something in our motive very closely allied to a social force which, in this same quarter of a century, has had a very remarkable development—a force which has directed the investment of hundreds of millions of private capital in traveling machinery, built up many towns, replenished many treasuries, enriched kingdoms, been a practical matter for statesmanship, and swayed every commercial exchange in the world.

It is open to question whether we care much more than our ancestors did for all manner of

beauty of nature; whether we appreciate leaf and flower form and flower color, for instance, more than they. We have a greater variety of flowers; our curiosity about them is more stimulated, our science advanced, we take more interest in them from the point of view of the collector and classifier; they are matters of fashion; we use them more profusely. But there is room for doubt if they act more powerfully upon our sensibilities, and if we make on the whole a more fitting use of them, there can be no like question as to our more general susceptibility to the beauty of clouds, snowy peaks, mountain gorges, forests, meadows, and brooks, as we know them in *the broad combining way of scenery*. Even if this doubt should not have weight, it would be much easier to see something akin to regard for scenery in the demand which has led our cities to obtain possession of the broad bodies of land in our parks, than that of interest in the beauty of nature such as may be gratified in a conservatory, a garden, a flower-pot, or a posey, saying nothing of natural beauty such as exists even in jewels, furs, fruits, or plumage, or in trees individually regarded and as they grow on the lawn of a cottage.

But now, if we call this force interest in the beauty of natural scenery (to distinguish it from

interest in the beauty of nature) we shall find another form of its operation from that evinced by tourists and sojourning seekers of scenery in the more general development of talent in landscape-painting and in the demand for education in landscape-judgment, such as is met by works like those of Ruskin, Taine, and Hamerton, of which more are now read by Americans in every year than were all works of similar aims by all the world in a hundred years before we began our first park.

Why this great development of interest in natural landscape and all that pertains to it; to the art of it and the literature of it?

Considering that it has occurred simultaneously with a great enlargement of towns and development of urban habits, is it not reasonable to regard it as a self-preserving instinct of civilization?

Mr. Ruskin may be thought not only impractical but fanatical, and many of his sayings may be regarded as wild, but that he is inspired by a great and good motive, few will doubt. What is the ruling conviction of his zeal? In his own bitter words, it is that "This is an age in which we grow more and more artificial day by day, and see less and less worthiness in those pleasures which bring with them no marked excitement; in knowledge which affords no opportunity of display."

This is true, though a man ten times more unpractical and fanatical than Mr. Ruskin can be thought to be, had said it; and it is also true, that to all the economical advantages we have gained through modern discoveries and inventions, the great enlargement of the field of commerce, the growth of towns, and the spread of town ways of living, there are some grave drawbacks. We may yet understand them so imperfectly that we but little more than veil our ignorance when we talk of what is lost and suffered under the name of "vital exhaustion," "nervous irritation," and "constitutional depression"; when we speak of tendencies, through excessive materialism, to loss of faith and lowness of spirit, by which life is made, to some, questionably worth the living. But that there are actual drawbacks which we thus vaguely indicate to the prosperity of large towns, and that they deduct much from the wealth-producing and tax-bearing capacity of their people, as well as from the wealth-enjoying capacity, there can be no doubt.

The question remains whether the contemplation of beauty in natural scenery is practically of much value in counteracting and alleviating these evils, and whether it is possible, at reasonable cost, to make such beauty available to the daily use of great numbers of

townspeople? I do not propose to argue this question. I submit it to the Association as one needing discussion; for if the object of parks is not that thus suggested, I know of none which justifies their cost. On the other hand, if the object of parks is thus indicated, I know of no justification for a great deal that is done with them, and a great deal more that many men are bent on doing. That other objects than the cultivation of beauty of natural scenery may be associated with it economically, in a park, I am not disposed to deny; but that all such other objects should be held strictly subordinate to that, in order to justify the purchase and holding of these large properties, I am inclined to think, cannot be successfully disputed.

I will but add that the problem of a park, as it would appear, under the view which I have aimed to suggest, clear of unfortunate, temporary political necessities, is mainly the reconciliation of adequate beauty of nature in scenery with adequate means in artificial constructions of protecting the conditions of such beauty, and holding it available to the use, in a convenient and orderly way, of those needing it; and in the employment of such means for both purposes, as will make the park steadily gainful of that quality of beauty which comes only with age.

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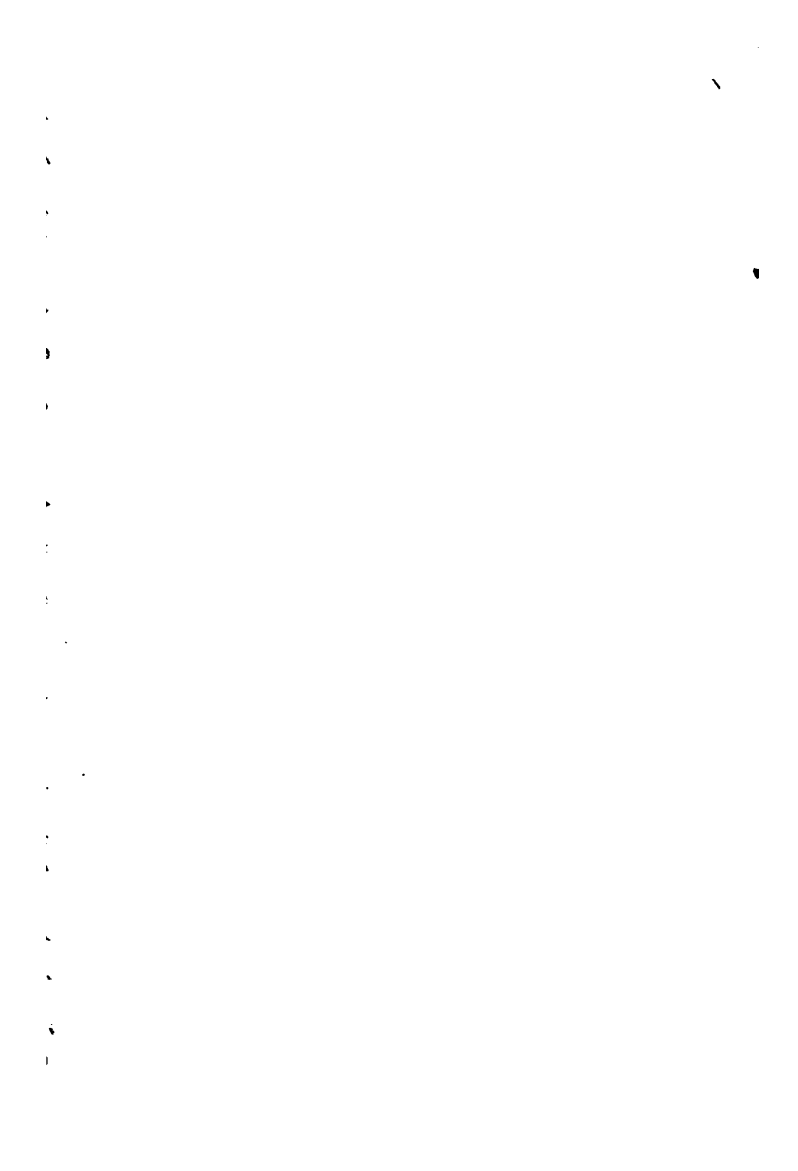
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